

HISTORY OF THE GOVT. COLLEGE OF ART AND CRAFT

BY

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INTRODUCTORY

THE Government College of Art and Craft, Calcutta completed its hundredth year on 29th June, 1964. It is but meet and proper that we should now recall the history of this premier and pioneer institution on this side of India. The College erstwhile known as the Govt. School of Art has played an important part in bringing about a cultural renaissance in our country. Its contribution to the rejuvenation of our national arts and crafts cannot be over-estimated.

The institution in its origin had a distinct character of its own. But the movement for its start may be traced much earlier than when it first came to the light of day. The Mechanics Institute or Institution was founded in Calcutta on 26th February, 1839 to provide for young men, preferably of the Eurasian brand, training in mechanical arts. Dr. Frederick Corbyn, the famous editor of *India Review*, a monthly miscellany of literature and science, is credited to have taken initiative in founding the school. The prominent Europeans and Indians formed a committee of management for the institution. Among the latter was Tarachand Chakravorty, leader of Young Bengal. The institution began with promise but could not carry on long for want of public support. We hear nothing of it in the late forties.

The movement, however, did not die out. The thoughtful section of the community, both European and Indian did not rest idle. They were looking for an opportunity of the kind. I propose to narrate. It should be noted here that in most matters of social utility the Europeans and Indians joined hands and tried their best to materialise them. A fresh occasion soon arose in early 1854.

Colonel E. Goodwyn, Company's Engineer delivered a lecture on "Union of Science Industry and Arts" on 2nd March, 1854 before an appreciative audience at a special meeting held under the auspices of the Bethune Society. In his speech Goodwyn urged the necessity of

interesting
concept of
Bagal's
Art School

establishing an institution for teaching youth of all classes industrial art based on scientific methods and offered some valuable suggestions to this effect. This led to the formation of the Society for the Promotion of Industrial Art. A strong committee of leading Europeans and Indians was formed without delay for the society, with Colonel E. Goodwyn as President and Hodgson Pratt, and Rajendra Lala Mitra as Secretaries. The Indian members on the committee besides Rajendra Lala were Dr. Suryakumar Goodeve Chakravorty, Ram Gopal Ghosh, Ram Chandra Mitra, Peary Chand Mitra and Pratap Chandra Singh of Paikpara.

A prospectus was issued by the Secretaries on behalf of the Committee on 6th April, 1854. Both Bengali and English newspapers gave publicity to the prospectus and commented favourably on the subject. The prospectus proposed to start a school of industrial art in Calcutta as early as possible with a view to providing instruction in modelling engraving and painting. Both Europeans and Indians contributed liberally. Amongst the contributors we find many making donations and offering monthly subscriptions. Raja Pratap Chandra Singh, a prominent member of the Committee and his brother Iswar Chandra Singh offered a house at Garanhatta, Chitpur free of rent. The institution was to be named "The School of Industrial Art".

II

THE SCHOOL OF INDUSTRIAL ART

The school opened on 16th August, 1854 at Garanhatta purely as a private enterprise. M. Rigaud a noted artist of the day agreed to serve the school in an honorary capacity as a teacher of Clay Modelling. M. Agyer was appointed teacher of painting. The appointment of a suitable teacher of Wood Engraving was postponed for the time. At the very start students for the clay modelling class numbered forty-five and those for painting fifty. The monthly tuition fee was fixed at Rupee one only for one subject and Rupee one and annas eight only for two subjects (classes) per student. The school immediately received popular support and a large number of intending students had to be refused admission for insufficient arrangement. The school was removed from Garanhatta to Late Motilal Seal's building, then known as Seal's College at Colootala in the middle of November 1854. This house was also offered rent free. The building being more commodious, larger number of students could be admitted. The committee of the Society for the Promotion of Industrial Art who founded and managed the school, organised an art exhibition from January 22 to February 3, 1855 where the works of the students were specially exhibited. Progress of the students in so short a time elicited praise from the visitors and public journals.

In February 1855, T. F. Fowler came from England and joined the institution as teacher of Engraving, Etching and Lithography on a salary of Rs. 300/- per month for three years.

The committee proposed to reorganise the classes in two divisions. In the first Drawing would be taught in all its aspects and in the second instruction in Clay Modelling & Casting; Engraving and Lithography as well as advanced Painting would be given. A painting class for adult out-students was about to be started. The Society could hardly meet the expenses of the school from its monthly income and the reserve fund created out of donations had to be largely drawn upon. They proposed to augment the income by soliciting the Government for a proper grant and by raising additional subscriptions. M. Rigaud had now become a paid incumbent drawing Rs. 300/- per month. The first anniversary of the school was held under the presidency of Sir Lawrence Peel, Chief Justice of the Supreme Court, Calcutta on 10th October, 1855. He distributed prizes to the students on the merit of their products and spoke highly of the attainments of the students in so short a time. He urged the Government to come to the help of the institution in forcible terms. On this occasion the first annual exhibition solely with the work of the students also took place on 10th & 11th October, 1855.

It appears that the solicitations of the Chief Justice bore fruit and the Bengal Government sanctioned some grant to the school. But this was also considered insufficient. Lord Canning, the new Governor-General personally visited the school and pleased with its work and prospective utility ordered his Government to grant Rs. 600/- per month. His orders were given effect to in July 1856. Financial condition thus improved, the institution gathered new momentum. Students of the Clay Modelling and Engraving classes executed orders of outside parties and enjoyed a portion of the commission out of the profits. Those of the Engraving class designed and executed the illustrations of D. L. Richardson's book *On Flowers and Flower Gardens* under the supervision of their teacher Mr. Fowler. They also illustrate the Aesop's Fables for the D.P.I. Fowler died of short illness on 30th August, 1856 at the age of 27. He was giving instruction to half of the students in Drawing, Wood and Copper Plate Engraving, Lithographic Drawing and Printing, Water Colour Painting, etc. The Institution suffered greatly at his loss.

What
students
learned
to understand
as Art.

On the departure of Sir Lawrence Peel to England late 1855 a Peel Testimonial Committee was formed to commemorate his noble services to the people. Peel took keen interest in the welfare of the school. The committee raised subscriptions and created "Peel Testimonial Fund". They made over Rs. 7,500/- from this fund to the school authorities for awarding three monthly Peel Scholarships of Rs. 8/- each out of its interest to the best of the students.

The second anniversary was held on 12th March, 1857. We learn that Taraprasad Banerjee was awarded the first Peel Scholarship. An exhibition of the students' works was also organised as previously.

At the outbreak of the Sephoy Mutiny in May 1857 the Government reduced the monthly grant of Rs. 600/- to Rs. 350/-. The school passed through financial difficulties and internal troubles. The work of the institution did not expand as was expected. However, Photography was added to the subjects of study. Mr. Wheelley joined the school as a teacher of Engraving. The third anniversary of the school and the annual exhibition had to be postponed till September 1858. Both were held on 9th September, 1858. Sir Arthur W. Buller, acting Chief Justice of the Supreme Court presided over the meeting and declared five Peel Scholarships ranging between Rupees four and Rupees eight per month for the session. The recipients being Pramatha Nath Mitra, J. L. Pyne, Hari Sankar Khan, Prasanna Kumar Roy and Kalidas Pal. The President expressed satisfaction at the general progress of the students during this troublous period. He referred to the natural aesthetic taste of the Indians and expected that given a little opportunity the students of the school would soon be able to give sufficient proof of their natural taste and love for arts and crafts and revive the glory of their country—the land of Kutub Minar, Tajmahal and the Muslin.

*all examples
of useful art*

In late 1858 the Government grant was restored to Rs. 600/- per month. M. Rigaud was relieved of his services in August 1859 and Mr. Garick joined the institution as Head Teacher. The subjects of study were expanded to seven. By 1862-63 we find instruction being given in the following subjects :

1. Ornamental and figure drawing.
2. Wood Engraving.
3. Lithography.
4. Painting in oil.
5. Modelling and Plaster casting.
6. Pottery and
7. Photography.

*might lead to fine art
an exception.*

It was very difficult to meet with the requirements of the school with the income derived from the tuition fees as well as the Government's monthly grant. The Committee had no other alternative but to approach the Government with the proposal for either augmenting the grant or taking over the school themselves. Negotiations followed and Sir Cecil Beadon one of the promoters of the school, now the Lt.-Governor of Bengal took a prominent part in this matter. The Government agreed to take over its charge on certain conditions, one being the appointment of a suitable principal for the school from England.

art.



Pen & Ink Illustration

shows the purpose
of teaching art
+ illustration
and block
for printing.



Pen & Ink Illustration

by Preo Nath Das, 1869

The type of art in
the illustration
was accepted as art
by the public.

On their behalf the committee wrote to Dr. Redgrave R. A. Superintendent, London School of Design early in 1864 for the selection of a suitable candidate for the post of the principal. Redgrave selected Mr. H. H. Locke for the post. Locke reached Calcutta and took over the charge of the school from the committee on 29th June, 1864. The venue of the school was changed to 166, Bowbazar Street, Calcutta. The school came under the control and supervision of the Director of Public Instruction. The institution retained its former name for some years. The status of the committee was altogether changed. It continued as a mere advisory or consultative body.

III

A FULL-FLEDGED GOVERNMENT INSTITUTION THE FIRST PHASE

Years of Reorganisation

The school launched a new life under the stewardship of Mr. H. H. Locke, its first Principal. Locke organised the school and made a comprehensive scheme of curriculum of studies for the institution. He also adopted corrective measures to ensure regular attendance of the students which was rare in those days. The subjects of instruction were Drawing, Painting, Modelling, Design for manufacturer, Lithography, Wood Engraving and Photography, the last named one being abandoned after some time. For effective instruction of the students within the scheduled time Locke divided the subjects in several stages and sub-stages, the stages being: 1. Elementary linear drawing. 2. Higher free hand drawing. 3. Free hand drawing in light and shade. 4. Geometrical drawing by aid of instruments. 5. Painting (elementary course). 6. Painting (higher course). 7. Modelling. 8. Elementary design. 9. Technical design. 10. Lithography. 11. Wood engraving and 12. Photography.

Each stage was subdivided into two or three sub-stages. As for example the second stage, i.e. the higher free hand drawing had the following sub-stages:

- a. Outline from flat, ornament, flowers, foliage, human figure and animal forms from copies.
- b. Outline from the round or solid objects, model drawing, outline of ornament, figure, etc. from casts.
- c. Outline from nature, flowers, foliage, etc. ✓

*Basic Training
Geometrical
with instruction
mean from
(Hawell)
But drawing
from solid
objects
perspective*

The scheme produced satisfactory results. Within two years the Principal reported progress of the students in most of the subjects. He referred particularly to the internal decoration of St. Peter's Church, Fort William, taken up by the students in his report to D.P.I. for 1865-66. Locke writes in the same report "The progress of the students in various stages generally has been such as to give me great satisfaction. I have every reason to doubt the soundness of the opinion which is so often expressed by the Europeans here as to have become almost an article of faith with them, that a Bengali can only become a good 'copyist'. Young as the school is, yet (if we date at least from its reorganisation as a Government Institution since more than four-fifths of the present students have entered) there is nevertheless already a fair amount of good drawing from the round, from the antique and from nature. The progress also in wood engraving and lithography has been most satisfactory".

Under Locke's guidance students also executed some useful work for the Asiatic Society. The important items of work being 'Ethnological busts consisting of casts from life of human beings of various races and post mortem casts from animals and also some facsimile coloured casts of meteorites, fossils, etc.' The Council of the Society expressed great satisfaction at their work in the following appreciative terms in its annual report for 1865. "The Council feel it their duty to express their obligation to the Government School of Art to which they are indebted for a series of models of these stones (meteorites) produced with a fidelity which they believe will be highly appreciated by the European Museums to which they have been or will be presented". Students according to Locke, received payments for these outside works and this served as an additional inducement for their longer stay in the school, necessary for the attainment of proficiency.

Locke also arranged for several prizes for meritorious students. Here too the generous well wishers of the school contributed liberally. These prizes were awarded at a ceremony held on the 16th February, 1867 under the presidency of Lt.-Governor Sir Cecil Beadon. Among the recipients we find mention of such notable artists of later days as Kalidas Pal and Annoda Prasad Bagchi. *impd.*

In early 1869 the school underwent certain changes in its instructing staff. Mr. Garick, the Headmaster left the Institution. Instead of appointing a new hand Locke engaged three of the advanced students—Annoda Prasad Bagchi, Syama Charan Srimani and R. B. Lawson temporarily in the teaching staff on a monthly allowance of Rs. 20/- each. This experiment worked well. Locke wrote in his report to D.P.I. (1869-70): "It is therefore, with extreme gratification that after more than a year of trial I am able to report to you that the plan has been attended with complete success." Mr. Sedgfield joined the school as teacher of Lithography by this time. The important outside

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change
and art.*

work of the year 1869-70 by the students as reported by Locke, were interior decoration of the State rooms of Government House, a series of photographs, drawings and casts from the ancient architectural remains at Bhubaneswar. On this work of the students Locke remarks: "It seems worthwhile to point out that our school has thus been the means of saving to the government a sum equal to our whole grant for one year".*

what was meant by artist?

The popularity of the institution was on the increase. The people gradually came to appreciate its utility. In 1864 when Locke joined, there were only 13 students on the rolls. The number increased to 48 in 1869-70. To acquire proficiency a student had to stay at least 4 years in the school continuously. But he could hardly stay more than two years due to pressure from his parents or guardians for pecuniary reasons. Locke proposed to institute some scholarships for the deserving students so that they might be induced to stay longer in the school to complete their course. It should be mentioned here that we hear nothing of the Peel Memorial Prize Fund since the taking over of the Institution by the Government.

The teaching staff worked satisfactorily. Locke thankfully referred to the careful manner in which his student-teachers R. B. Lawson, Syama Charan Pal, Annoda Prasad Bagchi and Gopal Chandra Pal conducted their classes. In his memorandum to Locke, Sedgfield the teacher of lithography expressed great satisfaction over the works of his students. According to him, "Several of the students have produced very creditable and effective lithographs and the ability to do this class of work which they have shown must certainly be of great service to them hereafter if they intend to follow lithography as a profession". (Report on Public Instruction for 1870-71).

We find the above arrangements continued even in 1871-72. In this year's report Locke particularly referred to the services rendered by two of his student-teachers, Syama Charan Srimani and Annoda Prasad Bagchi in these words: "I think however that none of them would grudge my bringing prominently to your notice the unwearied assiduity and industry in the discharge of his duties which continues to be shown by Babu Syama Charan Srimani†. Babu Annoda Prasad Bagchi‡ has also become a very efficient teacher, as well as having attained the position of being quite the best Bengali artist I have ever heard of. I anticipate for him a very successful career".

* It is interesting to note that the Government grant for 1868-69 stood at Rs. 19,088-00.

† We do not exactly know when Syama Charan Srimani left the school. We find him engaged as a teacher of Drawing in the National School of Naba Gopal Mitra started in April 1872.

‡ Annoda Prasad Bagchi writes his biographer, left the institution in April 1876 and entered into an independent career as an artist (vide *Annoda Jibani* page 49).

ONWARD MARCH

The reforms introduced and the methods followed by Locke laid the school on a strong foundation. Its career of National utility was assured. Both the top ranking Government officers and the elite of the society—European and Indian came to appreciate its services more and more as the years rolled on. Progress in different branches of study attracted attention of the art-lovers and critics even in the early seventies. An international exhibition was held at Kensington, London in 1871. On behalf of the exhibition a committee was formed in Bengal. The committee sent some of the excellent specimens of the students' work namely pen and ink etching of the carved ornamentation of the Orissa temples prepared for the illustration of an archaeological work on Orissa by Rajendra Lala Mitra, as also drawing, wood engraving, lithography and modelling. Under the guidance of Mr. Locke some of the students had already taken up Indian subjects for their art study and on the specimens forwarded to the International Exhibition this time he ventured to remark that "Trajan Rosette" and "Madeleine Pilaster" so wearisome in English art school exhibitions to the visitors would be replaced by the "Bhagabati finial" the "Rajrani Corbel" or the "Mukteswar Mouldings" and would give them sufficient relief. Locke adds: "My desire is that while Callimachus and Apollodorus Ghiberti and Sansovino shall be studied with all reverence, the students of Bengal school of art shall acquire at the same time a knowledge of the type and details of which belong to the admirable ornamental art of their fathers". (*Ibid*, for 1870-71)

The progress of the school continued unabated. Students' art works not only elicited praise from here but also from abroad. Dr. Fayer's *Thanatophidia of India* a standard book on Indian snakes was published in 1872. Its illustrations were designed and executed by the students of this school. The illustrations were so accurately and beautifully done that they at once attracted attention of the authorities on the subject. The English journals of high standard such as, *The Lancet*, *The Medical Gazette*, *The Edinburgh Medical Journal*, *The Saturday Review* and *The Athenaeum* commented very favourably on the work and expressed great satisfaction at the manner in which the illustrations were executed. On the results of this important work of this nature Locke could not but feel highly gratified and remarked: "It must, I think, be conceded that the school has proved its utility, and has done well with the limited means at its disposal" (*Ibid* for 1871-72).

High encomium on the works of the students by the Viceroy Lord Northbrook an art connoisseur himself, was a matter of great satisfaction to Mr. Locke and every well wisher of the institution. Northbrook visited the school on 18th May, 1872 and was highly satisfied with the



Antiquities of Orissa Plate IV
 Drawn & Lithographed by Ananda Prasad Bagchi
 Student, Govt. School of Art, Calcutta, 1869-70

performance of the students. His opinion runs as follows, "... ..
I was exceedingly struck with the great merit of work of several of the
students in that school.

There were some works both in respect of wood engraving, Litho-
graphy, Painting and Drawing executed in that school which would, I
do not hesitate to say be a credit to any institution of the same class
in any part of England." (*Ibid* for 1871-72).

An exhibition was held in March 1873 at Calcutta under the
special orders of Lord Northbrook. Specimens of works executed
in several art schools all over India were exhibited and the products of
the Calcutta school were declared to possess very considerable merit.
Sir Richard Temple, Finance Member to Northbrook's government as
President of the committee made the following reference to the laudable
works of the students of the local school:

"The Calcutta school is for Fine Art and Design alone. It is of
more limited scope than the other schools, but within that scope it is
excellent. Its display of drawing with light and shade, of lithography
and of wood engraving is very good and true sentiment of art pervades
its design. Its water colour of snakes are excellent. The studies of
heads of one of its pupils, Bagchi, show remarkable merit and originality,
very creditable to Bengal and Bengalees.on the whole it
is, within its scope, very efficient so far we can judge, and redounds
to the credit of its talented Principal, Mr. Locke, who works single
handed." (*Ibid* for 1872-73).

At the Fine Art Exhibition held in Calcutta in December 1873
the works of some of the students were considered of a very high order
and all found purchasers. But since they were not considered as
amateurs by the exhibition committee no prize was awarded to them.
Some of these exhibits were afterwards sent to the Madras Fine Art
Exhibition and "the Madras Committee not holding the same view, one
of our students (Annoda Prasad Bagchi) carried off the gold medal
offered by the Maharajah of Vizianagram for the best painting by a
native of India." (*Ibid* for 1873-74).

Unstinted testimony to the excellence of students' art work by
reputed art lovers and critics and its public approval in the exhibitions
at Calcutta and Madras gave a fillip to the cause that the school
represented and raised it high in popular estimation. One proof of
this was the rapid increase in the number of students from 1873 to 1875.
The number in the former year stood at 105 while in the latter it
increased to 169. During the session 1874-75, 105 students of different
classes left school after staying one to three years. The total number,
therefore, may be calculated to 274 the highest it ever had. The
Principal could scarcely cope with the influx with the means at his dis-
posal, the limited accommodation and paucity of teachers and requisite
books and materials being the largest drawbacks.

In spite of these drawbacks, however the advanced students who stayed longer in the school and acquired proficiency in their respective subjects did satisfactory works for the outside parties on commission as fixed by the school authorities. He particularly referred to the very difficult plates used in Rajendra Lala Mitra's *Antiquities of Orissa*, Vol. I "for which several of the more advanced students have been for a long time engaged . . ." (*Ibid* for 1874-75).^{*} Rajendra Lala wrote on the lithographs of his book in highly gratifying terms. "Your pupils have unquestionably done better than any English lithographer specimens of whose work had been sent as a guide." The works produced by the students generally in their respective classes, according to Mr. Locke, 'continues to be of the same quality as I have hitherto reported it, namely such as would quite stand comparison with work of students of the same standing in art school in England' "

The most important piece of work turned out by the school during the year following was a series of 433 anatomical and surgical diagrams prepared by two students Naba Kumar Biswas and Sashi Bhusan Srimani for the late Dr. Gayer for use in his lectures at the Medical College. 'These were found of the very greatest service in the illustration of surgical lectures'. (*Ibid* for 1876-77).

To arrest the rush of students and to ensure the success of the school unhampered, Principal Locke with the approval of the authorities raised the tuition fee from Re. 1.00 to Rupees three only per head per month in August 1875. The effect of this measure was soon perceived. The number of students gradually decreased and on the rolls of 1878 it stood at 89 only. The Principal reported that though the number had been so reduced in three years still the school had gained much so far as its efficiency with the limited accommodation and instructing staff was concerned. Pupils stayed longer in the school and most of them were eager to complete the respective branches of their studies. Proficiency of the students was more than proved by the excellence of the work in the school as also for the outside parties. Those who left the school won reputation as very skilled general lithographers, wood engravers, modellers, designers and architectural and mechanical draughtsmen. Some of the ex-students started a studio which also was an additional proof of the high standard of instruction in different branches of art study.

The quality of work by students and ex-students of the school was highly testified too in the Fine Art Exhibition of 1879 second of its kind held in Calcutta in this decade. Fourteen of them contributed 66

^{*} According to *Annoda Jibani* (P. 38) besides, Annoda Prasad Bagchi, Gopal Chandra Pal, Kalidas Pa., Harish Chandra Khan and some others went to Bhubaneswar in 1868-69 and worked for Rajendra Lala Mitra under the guidance of D. Garick, Head teacher on a monthly allowance of Rs. 75/-. It is mentioned that Annoda Prasad was engaged similar remuneration. We may infer that his fellow students also received



Kali Dhan Chandra
10 August 1884

Pen & Ink drawing
by Kali Dhan Chandra, 1884

paintings and other studies from life and 122 specimens of wood engraving and lithography. They carried off four prizes and three certificates. Prizes being 9 in number and they having competed only for seven the result was therefore highly satisfactory. Naba Kumar Biswas was the recipient of Maharaja Jatindra Mohan Tagore's prize for best painting in water colour of fruit or flowers and the Maharaja of Burdwan's prize for the best figure subject in water colour. Principal Locke quotes with gratification friendly criticisms of the newspapers. "Of the two students Naba Kumar Biswas and Annoda Prasad Battacharya it was further said that 'they can hold their own in their own lines against all comers' and the architectural lithographs of the last mentioned student are excellent." (*Ibid* for 1878-79).

It should be mentioned here that Annoda Prasad Battacharya mastered the art and technique of life study and portrait painting and amongst those whose portrait he had the honour to work out and deserve mention were Brahmananda Keshab Chandra Sen, Maharaja Rama Nath Tagore and Rajendra Lala Mitra. The welfare of the school was uppermost in Mr. Locke's mind and he bestowed much thought upon it. In his report of 1878-79 Locke referred to a basic defect in training the newcomers. Much time they had to spend on elementary drawing which might have been learnt earlier in ordinary school and might have saved it for useful instruction. Locke pointedly adds: "It is much to be regretted that the raw materials which comes to us is so very raw. We have to begin absolutely at the beginning—black board work—with our new students which as though at the Presidency or the Medical College the students had to begin their course learning to read and write." He cited the example of the parochial school masters of England who would not be given a certificate unless he could teach the drawing of simple figures on the black board. He suggested that this course should be followed here to the benefit of both the students and the teachers. In his words, "This state of things will doubtless continue as long as simple outline drawing (of the most elementary kind) is not placed beside reading and writing as part of the humblest receiving Government aid". (*Ibid* for 1878-79).

The school derived much benefit from a cognate institution which had been set up three years earlier directly by the Government. Students of the higher painting and other courses used to find models for the respective subjects. In the story of the school this Institution, therefore, holds a prominent place. It is told presently

THE ART GALLERY AND AFTER

Sir Richard Temple, now Lieutenant Governor of Bengal [1874-77] took keen interest in the art education of the Indians. It was through his initiative and cordial support of the Viceroy Lord Northbrook that the Art Gallery was established in April, 1876 in connection with the Govt. School of Art. The Gallery was housed in 164 and 165, Bowbazar Street, No. 166 being occupied by the Art School. The object of the Art Gallery was twofold: 1. to interest the general public in art and 2. to provide additional instruction through example in the various branches of art for the pupils of the Art School. In the beginning the latter object was only in view. In the Report of the D.P.I. for 1876-77 we find the object narrated as under :

"The object of the institution was to give the native youth of India an idea of men and things in Europe both present and past, not that they might learn to produce feeble imitations of European art, but rather that they might study European methods of imitation and apply them to the representation of natural scenery, architectural monuments, ethnical varieties, and national costumes, in their own country". It also contemplated to collect plans and drawings of great engineering works in all parts of the world. Specimens of statuary and casts of antique works were to be specially included.

The Art Gallery opened with the gift of Lord Northbrook's valuable collection of pictures. A committee was formed with D.P.I. as President and the following members: L. D. P. Broughton, Major H. S. Jarrett, Colesworthy Grant and H. H. Locke. Mr. Locke the Principal was placed in immediate charge of the Gallery. Later, the Principal of the Art School was also designated Keeper of the Art Gallery. The Government granted immediately a sum of money to purchase pictures of various types from Europe. Bhagabati Charan Mallick made a donation of Rs. 500 00 for the Art Gallery. Since August 1877 the Government sanctioned an annual grant of Rs. 10,000.00 for the purpose. Famous pictures both classical and modern were being purchased either in original or copies thereof from all over Europe. Justice Princep helped the Committee in procuring valuable pictures while he was in England. Soon the Gallery became popular both with the students and the public.

With the establishment of the Art Gallery the general public became more and more art conscious and the works of the artists were much more in demand than formerly. That the school also deriving great incentive and inspiration thereby has been already narrated. We have now reached the year 1880. Some changes were effected in the teaching staff this year. Mr. Sedgfield resigned and in his place was appointed Annoda Prasad Bagchi as teacher of lithography on 20th

June, 1880. One of the most brilliant students of the school, Annada Prasad Bagchi had already won high reputation as an artist. He had also teaching experience. He served the school as a student-teacher upto 1876 when he left it and entered into an independent career.

Locke holds a very high opinion about Annada Prasad Bagchi. He moved the Government to appoint him as permanent teacher. To fit in the appointment of Annada Prasad Bagchi the post of Headmaster had to be created. The progress of the school was reassured.

Things would have gone on smoothly had there not been an untoward incident in 1882. Locke had been serving the Economic Museum as Secretary since its inception in 1873. The Museum was sponsored by Sir George Campbell then Lt. Governor of Bengal. It was a Government subsidised institution and the subsequent Lt-Governors took interest also in its improvement. Locke had worked tremendously for the success of the Museum and procured mostly through Government agencies agricultural and industrial products from all over the country. In early 1882 serious differences as regard its management occurred between the President Justice Princep and Mr Locke the Secretary. Sir Ashley Eden then Lt-Governor (1877-82) intervened. But the uncompromising attitude of Mr. Locke persisted and this enraged Sir Ashley. It told heavily directly on Mr Locke and indirectly on the School of Art. Locke was compelled to take leave on medical certificate for two years and three months from May, 1882 and went to England. To be forcibly away from his first love, the School of Art and his creation, the Economic Museum was a severe wrench for Mr Locke. Thus disgraced he passed through mental agony and his health also broke down.

During his absence Mr. Schaumburg officiated as Principal of the School. It should be said to his credit that Mr. Schaumburg strove hard to maintain the high standard of efficiency and tradition laid down by Mr Locke. The number of students on the rolls gradually increased and in 1885 it stood at 139. Schaumburg reintroduced the lithographic class which had been abandoned for some time and opened three new classes of Oil Painting, Decorative Painting and Landscape painting by 1883. Wood carving and metal repousse classes were added anew in February 1884. Students fared very creditably in the International Exhibition held in Calcutta in 1883 and received one gold, two silver and three bronze medals together with three first and three second class certificates. Besides the work of the Exhibition students prepared nine casts from the remains of the city of Gour for the South Kensington Museum, London. We also find the lithographic class "engaged in the illustration of a monograph on figs by Dr. George King of the Botanic Gardens and of a work of the agriculture of Behar by Mr. G. A. Grierson" (*Ibid* for 1883-84).

Mr. Locke returned from England and joined the institution after the furlough was over. Under his guidance its work went on smoothly. The school prospered. He laid special emphasis on the work of his assistants, who were all Indians and ex-students of the school and particularly those of Annoda Prasad Bagchi the Headmaster. Though of broken health Locke continued his work as formerly with the same amount of zeal. But he suddenly expired on Christmas Day 25th December, 1885 at Calcutta. We regret to note that not a word of sorrow far less of appreciation found its way in the D.P.I.'s report. Perhaps the ghost of the wrath in high quarters pursued him even to the grave. Indians cannot but be grateful to the talented Principal Mr. Locke for his services to the cause of art and industry in India. The Indian Press however noticed his death with gratitude within their limited means and space.

IV

THE SECOND PHASE

Period of Activity and Achievement

After the death of Locke some important additions were effected in the instructing staff of the School. M. Schaumburg was now appointed a fullfledged Principal of the School. It was for the first time that the post of an Assistant Principal was created. O. Ghilardi, an Italian artist of repute joined the post on the 29th January, 1886. Some time he was the instructor of Abanindra Nath Tagore in painting and has been immortalised by the latter in his '*Jorasankor Dhare*'. Annoda Prasad Bagchi continued as the Headmaster. Unfortunately Schaumburg died during the session 1885-86 and Ghilardi had to act in his place for more than a year.

Work continued in different branches of study unhampered and marked improvement with some changes was noticed in cast and bust drawing class (ii) wood carving and metal chasing (iii) lithographic and engraving (iv) modelling (v) elementary drawing and (vi) architectural and mechanical class. Nature of work in the wood carving and metal chasing classes was altogether changed. Ghilardi designed two artistic coffers on pure Hindu style with figures, ornaments and emblems and Annada Prasad Bagchi executed them as a model for the students who also participated in its execution. Thereafter they took to this branch with zeal. Fresco painting was added anew to the curriculum entirely on the principle of ancient Indian decorative art. Students had hitherto been instructed in European style of painting and this innovation could not attract them readily. Ghilardi reports :

"The late Mr. Schaumburg pointed out to me the necessity of reinstating Indian decorative art in its original brilliancy, but both he

and myself were fully aware that we should have been undertaking a task beyond our powers for this reason that we should have found in the native students themselves the chief and the strongest opposition to our efforts. It is for this reason that our newly established fresco-painting class numbers only eight students" (*Report on Public Instruction for 1885-86*).

An important innovation was introduced in the architectural class in 1886-87. Henceforward students of this class had to draw from 'Indian architectural models, especially from Bhuvaneshwar casts'. They were also to copy them 'on an enlarged scale for the archaeological plates that are issued in the Art Journal'. In order to stimulate the study of Indian art, Ghilardi offered at his own expense six prizes of Rs. 5/- each.

Services rendered by Annoda Prasad Bagchi were specially referred to by Ghilardi in his reports to the D.P.I. for 1885-86 and the year following. In the first he writes: "[Annoda Prasad] is above all ignorant of prejudices and I do not hesitate to place him first among Indian artists". In the report of 1886-87 we also find him to state "the institution is largely indebted to him [Annoda Prasad Bagchi] for various artistic productions which have contributed to raise the fame of the Calcutta School of Art".

Prominent students of the School found employment in educational institutions in and outside Calcutta besides independent business and other services. The Report for 1886-87 says " . . . as an encouraging feature in the history of the school during the current year, the fact that one pupil of the name of Kali Kumar Adhikari, has been sent as a teacher to the Murshidabad Technical School, another has been sent to Allahabad Girls High School while five have joined in starting a Studio in Calcutta". The Studio in Calcutta mentioned here was no other than the famous "Calcutta Art Studio" which also ran the monthly journal *SILPA PUSPANJALI*, mainly devoted to the matters relating to art and industry.

W. H. Jobbins joined the institution as Superintendent on 10th June, 1887. Henceforward we find the designation Principal being substituted by Superintendent as in the case of Bethune College. Jobbins duly took over charge from Ghilardi, the Assistant Principal, who was also being designated as Assistant Superintendent. Most of the classes worked satisfactorily and on the technical side the students executed the orders from outside, the Government departments as also the Asiatic Society and the Indian Museum being the main parties.

New arrangements were effected immediately after the arrival of Mr. Jobbins. In July 1887 revised course of instruction was framed for each class mainly with a view to improve the instruction in Fine Art.

The Report for the year 1887-88 states: "Arrangements have also been made to hold annual examination in free hand drawing, geometry and perspective. Art certificates of the third or higher grade will be awarded to those students who execute the prescribed work in each class and pass the required examination in each group". These groups comprised advanced free hand drawing and light and shade drawing, elementary painting and drawing, architectural and mechanical drawing and modelling. It was also proposed to award certificates of proficiency to the students of lithography, wood engraving, metal chasing and wood carving classes. It should also be mentioned that the Public Works Department established four annual scholarships in architectural and mechanical drawing classes. This was some thing like apprenticeship of the present day.

The new arrangement worked satisfactorily. Proficiency attained by the students due to this reform proved very satisfactory in the annual exhibition of the students' work as reported in 1888-89. Several prizes, including the Viceroy's silver medal, D.P.I.'s four silver medals and gold medal of Bara Thakur of Tipperah and one silver medal of Maharaja Jatindra Mohan Tagore (in connection with the Calcutta Art Society) were awarded to the successful competitors.

The session 1888-89 had also to its credit some new arrangements. Examination for certificate of teachership in the third grade was introduced. Several advanced students entered as candidates for this examination. According to the report: "... the works prescribed for this certificate include examples in various stages of drawing, as light and shade, out line, drawing with instrument, etc. ...". It further adds "... The second certificate 'Painting and Design' will be commenced after completion of the first. It is estimated that the execution of the works and preparation for the examination will take a year for each certificate".

It was stipulated that for the eligibility of teachership one must hold one or more certificates of the third grade. Special classes were instituted for those students desirous of becoming teachers. Another innovation was the establishment of a class for still life painting and within a short period progress of the students in this class was remarkable. The Headmaster Annoda Prasad Bagchi mastered this branch of art and two of his still life studies in oil colour had been so excellent that they were purchased for the Art Gallery. These were perhaps the first accession of pictures by an Indian artist to the gallery.

The examination for art teachership was held for the first time in December 1889. Amongst the 16 candidates who sat for the examination only four came out successful. Three of them found employment as art teachers in Hare School, Calcutta; Dacca Collegiate School and Hooghly Collegiate School, the remaining successful candidate being

absorbed as a draughtsman in the Indian Museum. A rather important event of the year was rearrangement in the distribution of stipends. Hitherto students were awarded stipends for an indefinite period. The number of stipends being limited young and meritorious students had been often precluded from getting them. It was decided that "in future stipends and free studentships shall be awarded annually to the students according to their position in the annual examination" (*Ibid* for 1889-90).

Work in the technical classes continued satisfactorily. Those for lithography and wood engraving as the report says did a good deal of useful work comprising botanical plates for the Royal Botanic Garden, miscellaneous works for Revenue and Agricultural departments of the Government of India and various plates for the Indian Museum and the Asiatic Society of Bengal. We have already referred to the metal chasing and wood carving classes. Works in these two classes according to Mr. Jobbins the Superintendent "was found during the past eight years to be a comparative failure". He reported to close them and to appoint two teachers for elementary free hand drawing - "the indispensable basis of art instruction out of the savings thus effected".

This year the Calcutta Art Society took the initiative in organising an Art Exhibition in which 52 works of the students of the school were exhibited and several medals and prizes were awarded to them as usual.

As proposed in the previous year the wood carving and metal chasing classes were closed in September 1890 and by the savings thus effected three teachers were newly appointed, one for advanced cast drawing class and two for elementary free hand and cast drawing. It was also proposed to reopen Photography class after a long interval of its abolition and to start a new class for etching copper. Lithography and wood carving classes continued to serve satisfactorily several Government departments and outside parties as before. This time we find them to work also for Surgeon General and Sanitary Commissioner of Assam as well as the Photographic Society of India.

The Calcutta Art Society gave an impetus to art in general and to the School of Art in particular by holding art exhibitions as before during this and subsequent years. This year the school exhibited 76 works. The following medals and prizes were awarded to the pupils on the merit of their art productions:

Sir Charles Elliot's prize: (i) Rs. 50 - for the best picture, (ii) Rs. 50/- for the best model.

Sir Stuart Bayley's prize: Rs. 100/- for the best Bengal Village or street scene.

Sir Alfred Croft's medal: (i) for a head painted from life in colour, (ii) for a study of still life, (iii) for modelling and (iv) for architectural drawing.

What was
24th as Art

The Society's silver medals: (i) for pen and ink drawing and (ii) for the best model.

The Superintendent, Mr. Jobbins observes that "the impulse given to local art and the incentive to greater excellence produced in the school by the formation of the Calcutta Art Society, cannot be over estimated (*Ibid* for 1890-91).

Long before, Principal Locke proposed to introduce drawing into the curriculum of studies of the Primary and Secondary Schools. In about 1892 the Government took up the matter and in a resolution made drawing "a compulsory part of course in training schools and all but compulsory for the Entrance Examination." (*Ibid* for 1891-92). This gave a great impulse to art education in Bengal. The Report for 1891-92 adds: "Passed students of this school now rank themselves as teachers along with University graduates, and the habit of treating artists and artisans alike, which is so strong in this country, is likely to give way ere long." Since the Government resolution there arose a great demand for Art teachers in ordinary schools. But without proper arrangement the School of Art could not cope with the demand and the Government order could not therefore be given effect to immediately.

The different technical classes were fully engaged in works for the official and non-official parties. By this time the School is found to be engaged in works other than highly technical. The report for the year says: "A taste has also been created for artistic excellence in school literature. Books illustrated after the European method are coming into fashion, and engraving, lithography, photography and etching are almost in general demand." (*Ibid* for 1891-92) taste

By 1892 a new chapter opened in the life of the school of Art. The building at Bowbazar in which the school was housed for more than twenty-five years and the Art Gallery for fifteen years were in a dilapidated condition. The Superintendent felt the imperative need of removal of the school to a new habitat either rented or otherwise and wrote to the Government accordingly. The Government took up the matter immediately. Within a short time a commodious building was constructed on a site adjacent to the Indian Museum. The School was transferred to this venue in February 1892. The Art Gallery took about two years more to be removed. It was feared that the number of students would fall as it was situated at a considerable distance from the Indian quarter of the town. This fear was proved baseless. Consideration of distance gave way to that of utility. We find the number of students on the rolls rose from 169 in 1892 to 270 in 1895. The Superintendent opined that the number of students would have been more in the latter year had there not been the prevalence of small pox in the Indian portion of the town.

Now that the school was shifted to this new building classes could be held in spacious rooms with increasing number of students. Instructions in different technical classes as well as in fine art was given with comparative ease and comfort. Students of the former classes applied themselves more vigorously than before to the work assigned to them. It was possible for the advanced students to execute more orders from the Government Departments as well as from the private firms from 1892 onwards. The prompt and qualified execution of the orders gave satisfaction to and elicited praise from the parties concerned. The Superintendent writes: "the general character of the work done in the school will compare favourably with that of any art school in the United Kingdom." (*Report on the Public Instruction for 1893-94*). In support of his views we may mention the opinion of the Superintendent of the Indian Museum, A. A. Alcock, under whom two students of the school had been working. He writes in the report of their work, "The illustrations of the Zoology of the R.I.M.S. Investigator have been highly praised by several of the leading authorities of Europe as more remarkable, skilful and careful work."

Dr. Lt.-Colonel Hendley purchased five works of drawings from the architectural casts, production of the school for the Jaipur Museum. An authority on matters connected with art in India, Dr. Hendley "expressed his surprise at the unusual excellence of the work done, not only in the advanced drawing and painting classes, but also in the technical classes of lithography and wood engraving". (*Ibid* for 1894-95). Exceedingly pleased with the work the Maharaja of Jaipur "presented six parts of the valuable beautifully illustrated works known as the 'Jaipur Portfolio' to be awarded as prizes to the students of the architectural class" (*Ibid* for 1894-95).

One word should be added regarding Photography. It was possible for the school to start the photography class in 1892-93, materials and apparatus having been obtained from England. According to the report, "... only those students who have excelled in lithography will be admitted to the class, as the primary object of introducing photography is to give the necessary technical instruction to those students who are under a course of training as lithographers" (*Ibid* for 1892-93).

Students' progress in the fine art section deserves particular mention. In the successive annual exhibitions organised by the Calcutta Art Society, students' art productions used to be exhibited in large numbers and their excellence was recognised by art lovers and connoisseurs. The students received prizes—gold and silver medals and certificates of merit from different persons through the society.

In 1892-93 the Bombay Fine Art Exhibition was held simultaneously with that in Calcutta organised by the local society. Students'

productions were sent for Bombay exhibition on request. Although those were not of representative character, they were very much appreciated for their excellence. The Superintendent of the Bombay School of Art retained one of these exhibits as an example for the school. The art productions of the students were also being appreciated abroad. The Superintendent writes in the report of 1893-94: "I find in a Roman Newspaper *L. Reforma*, that Rahani Kanta Nag di Calcutta, formerly a student of the School of Art, has been awarded a special silver medal at the Institution of Fine Arts for modelling the figure. This is the second prize that he has won".

The Viceroy awarded a special medal to a draughtsman on the excellence of his drawing exhibited in the annual exhibition of 1893-94, as a personal recognition.

Prospects of the students were now very much bright and this was no less responsible for the rapid increase in the number on the rolls. They were being employed in larger numbers as Art teachers in schools, government and private, and also as technical assistants in various government departments and private firms. Particularly the Draughtsmen were much in demand even in far off places outside Bengal. The efforts of the successive Superintendents (previously known as Principals) in the matter of procuring employment to the qualified students deserves special mention. One such example may be cited here. Arrangements were made in 1892-93 with the Survey of India for admission of a number of specially trained students annually as probationers in the drawing office on stipend.

The relationship between the students and the teachers was all along cordial. The Superintendent noted it "as harmonious as could be desired." (*Ibid* for 1894-95).

Now for the Art Gallery an annexe to the Indian Museum was soon constructed adjoining the school building. Paintings and pictures of different kinds were reorganised in this new place and the Art Gallery was finally reopened on the 29th January, 1895 by the Viceroy Lord Elgin. In this connection an exhibition was also held. Lord and Lady Elgin were highly pleased with the school which they also visited this day. On this occasion Maharaja Jatindra Mohan Tagore awarded a gold medal and Sir Alfred Croft, the Director of Public Instruction, three silver medals to the successful students of the school. On the reopening day we find the following pictures in the Art Gallery:

Oil colour paintings 83; Water colour paintings 96; Engraving 18; Chromolithographs 51; Chalk and Pencil drawing 20; Photographs and other works 96. Most of the pictures were purchased from England.

The Superintendent, Mr. Jobbins, took long leave in the middle of 1895 on account of ill health. He left for England on 10th September.

1895, but died before reaching Suez. His death was a serious loss to the institution.

V

THE THIRD PHASE

A Reorganisation and Reorientation

O. Ghilardi officiated as Superintendent of the School for a little over nine months since the unfortunate departure and demise of Jobbins, the Superintendent. The authorities were on the look out for a suitable person for the post. Earnest Benfield Havell (b. 16 Sept. 1861) had served the Madras School of Art as Superintendent for about a decade from 1884. During this period his services were requisitioned by the Government, local and the central governments for enquiry into arts and manufactures of different provinces of the country, which may be styled in modern parlance as 'cottage industry'. Thereby he had imbibed a love for India's natural art and craft. Havell went on furlough in April 1892 for one year and eight months, after which he did not return. The choice of the authorities of the Calcutta School of Art fell upon this tried and sympathetic artist and art connoisseur for the post of the Superintendent. Havell arrived in Calcutta on 5th July, 1896 and joined the school as Superintendent on the day following, i.e. 6th July, 1896.

We have found already that the successive Superintendents or Principals had a free hand in the affairs of the school. They guided its destiny according to their light and leading. E. B. Havell was also no exception. According to the new regulations the school was separated into two distinct divisions, viz. (i) Industrial Art and (ii) Fine Art. The first division included (1) The advanced Design Class, (2) The Architectural and Mechanical Drawing Class, (3) The Lithography Class, (4) The Wood Engraving Class and (5) Modelling Class. In division II, solely set apart for fine art, students were taught drawing and painting from life studies, still life, etc. and Sculpture. Sons of artisans got the privilege of being admitted into division I on reduced fees. Students of the Fine Art Class had hitherto monopolised stipends and scholarships but since the time of reorganisation these privileges were curtailed and most of the students had to pay their monthly fees in full which was enhanced by this time. Annual Examination of the students in different classes of both the divisions was scheduled to be held regularly.

Division of classes.

Havell lost no time in introducing these reforms under the new regulations. He particularly put forward cogent reasons for this overall reform and reorganisation, as follows:

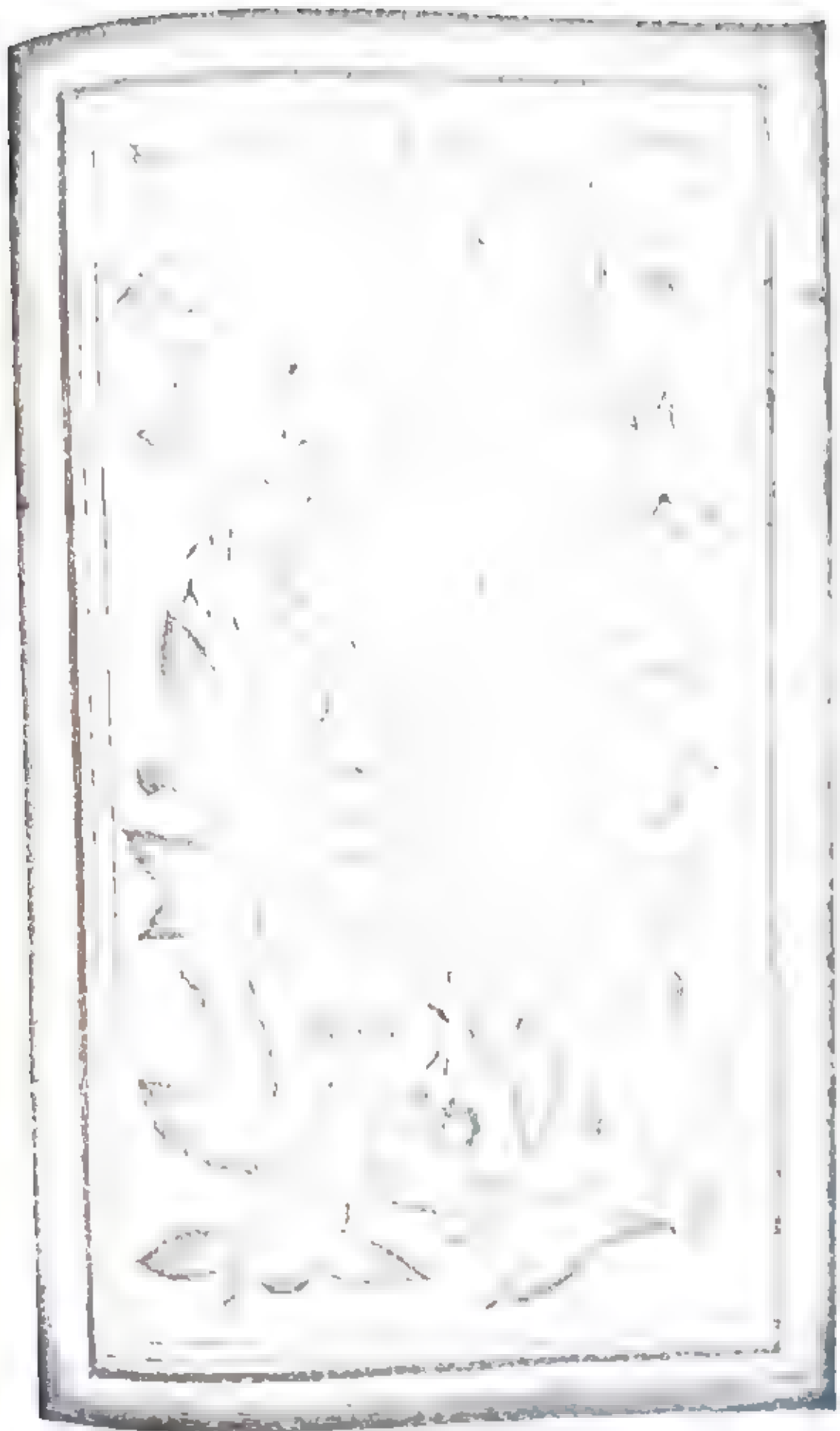
"The study of design, the foundation of all art, was entirely ignored and throughout, the general drawing and painting classes, the worst traditions of the English provincial art school forty year's ago, were followed. There were no general classes for practical geometry, mechanical drawing, and perspective. Oriental art was more or less ignored, thereby taking the Indian art students in a wrong direction. There was besides, no regular examination system for the issue of certificates to deserving students". (*Quinquennial Report for 1892-93 to 1896-97.*)

Havell put strong emphasis on the Oriental style of art instead of European. This was no doubt a revolutionary outlook which was at the time shared by very few even in this country. The educational authorities could not be expected to share the conviction of Havell but they as usual did not interfere and allowed Havell to have his own way. Thus we find the above *Quinquennial Report* (First of its kind) write as follows :

"By the changes now introduced it is claimed that a practical and efficient training will be given to drawing masters, designers, architectural and mechanical draftsman, modellers, wood engravers and lithographers in Division (I) and oriental art will be basis of all instruction given. All students will be instructed in ornamental design, and success at the school examination will be sole condition for the issue of certificate of proficiency. In division II greater attention will be given to the development of the students' aptitude for higher branches of painting and sculpture, and they will be brought much more quickly to the direct study of nature and human figure."

The proposed measures couched in the New Regulations and the reasons adduced in its favour by Mr. Havell roused criticism from a section of the people hitherto nursed in the tradition of European art. The students of the institution were also agitated over this new turn of affairs. Some of them went so far as to criticise the measures vehemently. The authorities could not naturally tolerate this sort of indiscipline among the students and some of them had to leave the institution. The seceders under the leadership of Ranada Prosad Gupta a student of the third year class started in 1897 a new school of art at Bowbazar Calcutta. 1897 being the Diamond Jubilee Year of the Queen Victoria the School was named the Jubilee Art Academy. A real lover of art, Ranada Prasad, though a student, conducted the school with a great zeal and courage rarely to be found in young men of little or no experience. A section of the elite of the city came to its support from the very beginning and we find the Municipality of Calcutta granting pecuniary aid to the institution from time to time. The school continued to exist for more than two decades and the personal contribution of Ranada Prasad Gupta cannot be over estimated.

This rupture and the subsequent establishment of the new school of art at Calcutta could not but affect the Govt. School of Art, so far



A Decorative Design (tempera)
by E. B. Havell.

as the roll strength of student was concerned. The number on its rolls on 31st March, 1896 was 273 but it was reduced to 226 on 31.3.1898. This temporary setback did not however deter the authorities to act up to the New Regulations, Mr. Havell the presiding authority of the institution, took pains immediately to introduce the New Regulations in all its aspects.

The intention of the New Regulations was: "... on the one hand, to develop the practical side of the school especially in the direction of decorative art, and, on the other, to give a higher aim and better training to those who entered the school to become painters or sculptors." (*Report for 1897-98*) Keeping this object strictly in view Mr. Havell commenced instruction in both the divisions, which in division I were mostly, as follows "... besides the general classes for drawing adapted for the practical requirements of teachers, designers and workmen, and artisans, includes the architectural and mechanical drawing class, the lithography and wood engraving classes, and the modelling class." (*Ibid*, 1897-98). Division II affords the ordinary artistic training in drawing painting and sculpture, similar to that of art academics in Europe.

The above *Report* made some observations on the intention and practical approach of Mr. Havell. It says "In Division I classes for decorative design were opened. Mr Havell, Superintendent of the school, says that considering that it is entirely a new subject in the school, very fair progress has been made. The branches of practical work to which he intends to give special attention for the present are -

(1) Fresco decoration for walls, . . . (2) Stained glass windows . . . and (3) Lacquer work and Stencilling . . . The practical teaching of those processes in the school will Mr Havell believes, open out a wide remunerative employment for students, thus a student who went through the whole course of Division I would be able to learn all of them and would be in a good position to earn a livelihood when he left the school." (*Ibid*.)

Regarding the probable effect of the New Regulations introduced in Division II the above report further adds: "The substitution of a better system of teaching, founded on that of best European Academies, in place of the methods formerly practised in the school, will, Mr. Havell believes, enable the students to make much more rapid progress, and to compete on more equal terms with European artists - than is now the case with Indian trained students.

A nearer approximation to European standards as regards technique in painting, sculpture, and leading to more remunerative work, will, Mr. Havell thinks, tend gradually to elevate the students' artistic ideas and to raise the level of public taste for high art in Bengal."

Other parts of the Regulations were also soon given effect to. Students from the artisan classes specially of the Silversmiths class got admitted into Division I on reduced fees. Division I monopolised largest numbers of students as the subjects taught were considered to be more remunerative and sure to procure employment after the instruction over. Those in Division II had not this prospect in view and the number of students naturally was very small in comparison with the former. Nevertheless students of both the divisions began to cultivate a love for real art due to the ideal instruction introduced by Havell and followed rigidly by his assistants.

Annual examination used to be regularly held and successful students given certificates of merit. We have on record a detailed account of the annual examination of students in divisions I and II held in 1900, three years after the introduction of the New Regulations. This is given as follows :

" In division I, 4 out of 11 passed in Advanced Design, 58 out of 83 in Elementary Design, 8 out of 10 in Advanced Perspective, 14 out of 25 in Flower Painting, 30 out of 33 in light and shade studies, 58 out of 64 in drawing foliage from nature, 24 out of 29 in drawing from actual measurement, 20 out of 25 in Orthographic Projection, 21 out of 25 in Isometric Projection, 19 out of 30 in Projection of shadows, 49 out of 72 in Geometry, 64 out of 88 in model drawing, and 62 out of 78 in free hand drawing. The average percentage of success in this division was about 75 against 59 in the previous year.

At the examination in Division II, 11 out of 14 passed in drawing studies of the head from life, 10 out of 13 in painting from still life, 6 out of 10 in drawing figures from life, 8 out of 9 in painting from casts, and 4 out of 9 in painting studies of the head from life. The average percentage of success was about 71 against 52 in the previous year." (Report for 1899-1900.)

As had already been said Division I attracted larger number of students on account of its employment potentiality. Many successful candidates each year found employment with the central and provincial governments, public and private schools, municipalities and mercantile firms, etc. The School of Art recouped its former position and its roll strength rose from 226 on 31st March 1898 to 272 on that day of 1900, the latter being the highest since Havell's taking office. The utility of the instruction given in the school came to be appreciated in no time by all concerned. The Exhibition of the work of the students, held on 22nd January 1900, continued up to 7th April 1900 gave sufficient proof of public appreciation by the number of visitors and purchases made. This exhibition was opened by the Viceroy Lord Curzon. After offering some comments on the exhibition Havell particularly stressed that

"in order to be a reality art must be recognised as a part of domestic and public life, and not merely be confined to museums and public galleries and collections of connoisseurs and . . . that it would be of great advantage to art education in India if schools of art were allowed to co-operate with the public works department which has the monopoly of all the most important architectural work of the country and guides the public taste regarding architectural decorative art." Havell writes: "All the methods of practical decoration now taught in the school viz. fresco-work, lacquer-work, stencilling and stained glass windows, have practical and economical advantages to commend them. In some cases they can be substituted for more expensive kinds of improved decoration now employed. Moreover the probability that a moderate expenditure in encouraging them would be the means of establishing several new art industries in Bengal, is I submit, worth consideration." (*Report for 1899-1900.*)

Some of the suggestions of Havell were soon given effect to and we find in the next year's *Report* that the students designed and executed the decoration of several rooms in Belvedere, and in three private houses of Calcutta. Havell, however could not be satisfied with this little response. So he proposed to decorate the class rooms of the school by the students themselves." As these various classes of artistic work can be performed by the students, it would seem most desirable to decorate the class rooms of the School of Art with samples of the work of the students in these various branches, not in show cases, but by decorating the rooms themselves, careful estimates being made of the costs of the various artistic embellishments so that the cost of improving Indian houses, to suit more refined tastes may be readily accessible" (*Report for 1900-1901*)

The expectations of Havell we find partially fulfilled in a considerable number of works executed by the students in and outside Calcutta. The *Quinquennial Report* for 1897-98 to 1901-02 also writes. "The pupils have decorated several private houses in Calcutta with fresco painting, orders were received for stained glass windows from mercantile firms, and an estimate was given for making stained-glass windows at St. Paul's Cathedral in Calcutta. The Assam Government has taken to Shillong some of the students of the school for designing the decorations of Government House at that place and carrying out the work."

Havell adopted a measure which would simultaneously educate the students in training schools and elevate public taste in art. The *Report* for 1900-01 mentions it in these appreciative terms: "In the lithography class the advanced students continued to execute a series of illustrations of decorative art from collection of the Art Gallery, which were distributed at a nominal cost to some of the training schools to be framed and hung on the walls of the class rooms. Mr. Havell looks upon these,

illustrations as of great value in educating the students, and would like to see this branch further developed, as a means also of educating public taste."

The Art Gallery as we have found had primarily been started as a valuable adjunct to the School of Art for instruction of the pupils though it was also subsequently opened to the public. Havell formulated a scheme for the reorganisation of the Art Gallery and in this he had the above object particularly in view. Specimens of Industrial Art were also now being purchased like those of Fine Art. Havell divided these purchases in three sections, e.g.,

Section I — Art applied to Industry.

Section II — Architecture and architectural decoration, and

Section III— Fine Art.

The Chief purchases at this time included some fine specimens of Nepal brassware for Section I and few original copies of Ajanta Cave paintings for Section II and some very fine paintings of Moghul period for Section III. Among the latter were three magnificent paintings bearing the seal of Jehangir and an inscription in the Emperor's handwriting, giving date, A.D. 1624, and the artist's name 'Ustad Mansur'. We have in the *Report* for 1897-98 the following observation on the newly added paintings in Section III: "Apart from their historic interest these paintings show that in some branches of fine art the Moghul artists reached a much higher degree of perfection than is generally supposed. They are invaluable as objects of study for native artists."

New additions were made to each of the sections from year to year after careful selection. By the year 1900 we find the Industrial or Applied art section enriched by the addition of several fine specimens of old Burmese silver repousse work. A beginning was made of a series of examples to illustrate the Kincob industry in Benares. That was in Mr. Havell's opinion "one of the very few of the industrial art of India in which modern examples, fit for a place in an art collection, can still be found." (*Report* for 1899-1900). The year following a collection of works of art was added by the purchase of Nepalese, Tibetan, Sikkim, Persian and Arab metal works. Substantial additions were made to the Benares Kincob collection. The Architectural section received a model of Wazir Khan's mosque made in the Lahore School of Art. The fine art section was increased by the purchase of old Indian paintings.

Havell went to England on furlough for a year from April 1902 to March 1903. During his absence O. Ghilardi, Assistant Superintendent officiated. At the end of 1902 was held the Delhi Darbar. In the

Darbar Exhibition several specimens of art including a large lacquered screen executed by the students of the school of art, Calcutta under the instruction of Havell, the Principal were exhibited. This latter work earned a Bronze medal for the school. Three teachers and eight students visited the Exhibition to study the exhibits.

Another matter of importance should be mentioned in this connection. Though not a student of the School of Art Abanindranath Tagore had already attained proficiency in fine art by sustained personal efforts and through private instruction. Tagore presented to the Darbar Exhibition pictures—two oil paintings and one water colour—through the Principal of the Calcutta School of Art. The painting entitled 'The Last Hours of Shah Jehan'* was the best of the three and won for him a silver medal.

* On this picture we have the following appreciative comments in *Indian Art at Delhi* 1903. Being the Official catalogue of the Delhi Exhibition 1902-1903 (By Sir George Watt, Director, the Illustrative part by Percy Brown A.R.C.A., Assistant Director) p. 455. 'The best of the three was no doubt the one entitled 'The Last Days (hours) of Shah Jehan' and represented two figures in a marble columned Imambara—the one with a very natural turn of the head gazing across the water the 'Taj Mahal'. The foreshortening of the head of the figure was one of the most striking parts of the picture. The delicate colouring and soft effect of the whole composition was most pleasing.'

The caption of the picture has in some places been differently given as 'The Last Hours of Shahjehan.'

During his furlough Havell contributed two very valuable articles on Indian Art to the famous London Art Journal *The Studio* in October 1902 and January 1903. The articles contained illustrations from the paintings of Abanindranath Tagore. Havell was a true lover of art and as such in no time he was able to appreciate the original talent of Abanindranath.

First of these articles of Havell in *The Studio* is "Some notes on Indian Pictorial Art" (October 15, 1902). Abanindranath was not only the topic of the article but all the illustrations were the production of his. The captions of the illustrations are as follows—

- (1). In the Zenana—(in monochrome).
- (2). Buddha and Sujata (full plate in colour).
- (3). The Traveller and the Lotus (in monochrome).
- (4). Princess' Lotus (in colour).
- (5). The Dark Night (in colour).

THE OVERALL CHANGE : SETTING UP NEW TRADITIONS IN ART STUDY

After his return from England, Havell took up the reins of office from Ghilardi in early April 1903. The system introduced by him had been meticulously followed by Ghilardi during his absence. The Report for 1903-04 gives ample proof of this. Havell, after his return, commenced work with the zeal of a new convert in this direction. Some of those of Division I worked satisfactorily in various directions. Some of those may be culled from the above and the subsequent reports. For example, the Report for 1904-05 says: "The students continued by practice fresco decoration, stencilling, lacquer-work, lithography, wood-engraving and stained glass window work, and executed some private works in each subject." In this year's report we find that students were taught and examined in 13 subjects in Division I and six in Division II. The number of passes was not unsatisfactory.

As usual students mustered strong in Division I for remunerative prospects and in the above year they were 223 in this section while Division II was attended by 22 students only. Havell was not at all satisfied with the work of the latter division and he opined: "In spite of inducements, a student seldom does any work out of school hours or in the vacations. This is never the case in Europe, where the vacations are purposely made long in order to afford the students greater opportunities for independent work."

Havell was all along conscious of the fundamental defect in the curriculum pursued in the school. Since his taking office he had been striving hard to remove this defect and chalk out a new line so that students might be conscious of the true import of fine art. Following the out-worn European technique they should not be turned into mere portrait painters and copyists but they should themselves carry out original works on Indian model based on Indian traditions and heritage.

The following observations of the fourth *Quinquennial Review* are helpful for our realising the status of the Calcutta School of Art: "... there is little indigenous art in Bengal, and consequently the Calcutta School of Art has not manufacturing industrial side, as has for example the School of Art of Madras; in fact the Calcutta School answers more nearly than do the other schools to the acceptation of the name 'School of Art' that is usual in England" (Quoted in the *Third Quinquennial Report*.)

The main function of the School of Art, we have seen, was accepted by Government as to improve the arts and industries of the country. The Secretary of State approved this principle while deciding in 1896 the matter of State aid and control. The educational conference of 1901 held at Simla and presided over by Lord Curzon, the Viceroy, reiterated

and developed the recommendations. This strengthened the hands of Havell to pursue his ideal.

The Art Gallery consisted 'almost entirely of copies of the old Italian and early English school' while Indian art was practically ignored (*Third Q. Report*). Havell however used to purchase specimens of original Indian Paintings of high order from time to time. But even in 1904 this was found to be very insignificant in comparison with those collected from Europe. Students took the latter as model. This process failed to arouse in them a love and regard for Indian art, we find it stated in the third *Quinquennial Report* (1902-03 to 1906-07) as follows :

"The object of having an art gallery attached to an art school is to mould the taste and direct the imagination of the students by means of the works of art exhibited, and yet though the students were Indian and the object of the school was, or rather should have been, the improvement of Indian art and not the introduction of European art, the collection of pictures which was got together for the art gallery consisted almost entirely of copies of the old Italian and early English school, while Indian art was practically ignored."

It was due to the imagination and exertion of Mr. Havell that this fundamental defect was removed immediately. Havell sold almost all the pictures of the art gallery by 1904 and had them replaced by fresh purchases of Indian paintings in original and copy. The art gallery was by 1905 a fullfledged Indian art gallery and brought to the fore the ideal to be achieved by the Indian art students. This over all change provoked criticism from a section of public which percolated also in the Press. The attitude of the students as a whole was also not very favourable. But in this matter, strange to say, Havell was fortunate enough to get approval of the authorities at the head of which was the Viceroy, Lord Curzon. It should be mentioned in this connection that though impervious to the political aspirations of the Indians, Lord Curzon had the insight to appreciate the high quality of Indian art, Architecture and Sculpture. The passage of *The Ancient Monuments Preservation Act Act VII of 1904* may be cited as an instance of Lord Curzon's sense of appreciation for Indian art and art objects.

As for the instructing staff several important changes had to be made in 1905. O. Ghilardi, the Assistant Superintendent retired as far as we gather, in February 1905. He served the institution zealously for over one quarter of a century. Ghilardi was a true lover of Indian art. In him Havell found an earnest admirer and faithful colleague. Annoda Prasad Bagchi, the Headmaster since 1880 served the institution most efficiently to the length of above thirty years. A student of Locke, the first Principal, he also imbibed a love for art and though trained in

European technique, and later renowned as a portrait painter, he gave proof of his originality in fine and applied art. He also retired in February 1905. Hari Narayan Bose (b. March 1868) a brilliant student and an instructor of the school since 1891 was promoted to the post of the Headmaster after Annoda Prasad's retirement. Henceforward he had to serve the institution for several terms as officiating Vice-Principal and once as Principal. Havell was thinking of a worthy colleague and co-adjutor who could efficiently fill the vacancy caused by the retirement of Ghilardi. He had already been acquainted with Abanindranath Tagore's ideals of art and art production and had in more than one article in *The Studio* of London interpreted the new technique and method of art as reflected in Abanindranath's paintings, which I have already referred to. It was not without some difficulty that he was able to persuade Abanindranath to serve the School of Art of which he was never an alumnus, as Assistant Superintendent, or henceforward more appropriately called the Vice-Principal. Abanindranath (b. 7th August, 1871) joined the School of Art as Vice-Principal on the 15th August, 1905. He accepted the post having been fully assured that he would have complete liberty in the pursuit of his method and ideal. In his *Jorasankor Dhare*, Abanindranath referred to this matter in some detail. He called Havell as his 'Guru' although he had never been his student. But Havell always very pleasingly addressed him as his 'collaborator' *

* Abanindranath accepted the post of Vice-Principal having been fully assured that he would have complete liberty in the pursuit of his method and ideal. The draft of this application and to be in the handwriting of Abanindranath and Havell runs as follows. It is application for the post is an historic document. The application refers briefly but modestly to his training and achievements in the field of art till that time.

I beg to apply for the post of Vice Principal of the Calcutta School of Art—which I understand is now vacant

As regards my qualification, I have studied European Art under Messrs Ghilardi and Palmer and subsequently done original work in the oriental style under the guidance and direction of Mr. Havell. I have not exhibited my work much but when I have, I have been fortunate enough to secure the approbation of critics both Indian and European. I have got the Cooch Behar Gold Medal in the Delhi Durbar Exhibition and Lady Olivant's prize in the Bombay Art Exhibition

Some of my pictures have also been reproduced in the *Studio* with favourable comments

Though I have not taken any University Degree I have been through a School Course up to the entrance standard and afterwards continued my studies at home. I have a fair knowledge of English and Sanskrit and am a writer of some repute in Bengali. I have made a specialty of study the art literature in English and Bengali.

I may add in conclusion that I had the good fortune of designing and executing the picture in connection with the Calcutta Ladies' Congratulatory address to Lady Curzon on her return to India after illness.

The fact of my being a great grandson of the late Dwarka Nath Tagore will, I trust, be sufficient to indicate my general respectability and position in society.

Something like an art club spontaneously grew around Mr. Havell, where artists and art connoisseurs both European and Indian met almost regularly towards the evening at the Art School and used to discuss about Indian art in all its aspects—painting, architecture and sculpture. This also strengthened the hands of Havell for pursuing the course of overall change in spite of opposition and criticism from certain quarters. *Bangiya Kala Samsad* also helped indirectly Mr. Havell in his reorientation scheme. The *Samsad* was founded in September 1905. Artists of different section were its members. Abanindranath the Vice-Principal served the *Samsad* as Secretary from its very start.

Havell could not continue in office for a long time. He suffered from mental derangement and early in January 1906 had to take long leave. He went to England on furlough for two years. The reins of office and the work of reorientation initiated by Havell fell upon the shoulders of Abanindranath who carried it out in letter and spirit. Abanindranath was promoted to officiate as the Principal during the leave period of Mr. Havell. It should also be noted that Abanindranath was the first Indian to be the Vice-Principal of the School of Art.

In the third Quinquennial Report the views of Abanindranath as regards the ideals of art education so ably propounded by Mr. Havell, have been incorporated, and we find—“The process of denationalisation went on for years, and for years our art students were made to spend the best part of their life in fruitless attempts to acquire ideas about an art which they never could or ever would rightly understand. It seems that 30 or 40 years was too valuable to have spent in useless experiments of this sort, and the mischief that was done will take another such period, if not longer, in undoing . . . We find few cultural men amongst the art students here. To produce any really good work the art students must be thoroughly conversant with the classical lore of his country. He must have a complete knowledge of its religious and social ideals, of the episodes of the Indian epics and history . . . without knowing the trend of the greatest Indians of the past, his productions are bound to fall short of a high standard.”

Work in both the divisions continued, but that of division I underwent a thorough change as has been hinted in the preceding lines. Those who had joined the school of art from the very beginning were of little or no education. People also hardly differentiated between artists and artisans. But due to the sustained efforts of the successive Principals and particularly the successful implementation by Abanindranath Tagore the reorientation scheme of Mr. Havell made a stir and change in the outlook. Educated students now began to veer round Abanindranath the Principal with a view to receiving instruction in this division. The number of students also increased. Among the new alumni we find since 1905 many students who in later life became

celebrated artists. These included Surendra Nath Ganguly, Nandalal Bose, Asit Kumar Halder, Jamini Ranjan Roy, Samarendra Nath Gupta, Sailendra Nath Dey, Hakim Md. Khan, K. Venkatappa, Jatindra Kumar Sen, Promode Kumar Chattopadaya and a host of others. They were inspired to take to fine art by their 'Guru' Abanindranath in more ways than one. Not only they were instructed individually in the class rooms but they were also given instruction and advice to study subjects drawn from Indian history, tradition and mythology.

I should recall here two artists of international reputation: Sashi Kumar Bhow and Panndra Nath Bose who were for some time students of this institution. The former studied in the school in early nineties and was a student at the time of Jobbins. The latter was a student of Havell since 1902. Sashi Kumar had his further instruction and training mostly in Italy where he stayed continuously for about six years. Panndra Nath went to Great Britain and received his further education in art in Edinburgh, Scotland. Here he gave proof of his excellence in sculpture and was elected as an associate of the Royal Scottish Academy in 1925. He was the first Indian to get the associateship.

Abanindranath in implementing the scheme had to face a serious difficulty for want of suitable teachers in all branches. We find him picking up from Patna, Lala Iswari Prasad a reputed artist from a traditional artist family as the teacher of Foliage in April 1906.

In an address to the students before the long summer vacation of 1906 Abanindranath in answer to the criticism levelled against Havell and his scheme also stressed the importance of getting at the source of our ancient lore by constant application. Abanindranath *inter alia* referred to an important letter by Principal H. H. Locke to one of his famous students Syama Charan Srimani in support of his contention.*

The Swadeshi movement had already begun in full swing. This was also very helpful for inspiring the students to take to fine art as explained and instructed by Abanindranath and his colleagues. Indian Society of Oriental Art was founded primarily at the instance of Abanindranath in 1907 to cultivate art in all its aspects after the ideal laid down by Havell and those of his thinking. The scope was however widened and included every thing not only Indian but also art of other countries of Asia, particularly Japan and China. Exhibitions organised by the Society were held from time to time and one such was organised in the School of Art. The students of the school could not but draw inspiration from him.

Students of Abanindranath had by this time made considerable progress in their art studies. By 1908 Mrs. Hartingham came to Ajanta

*VARATIYA PRACHIN SILPER ADAR NA ANADAR
Jalmabi, BAISHAK 1313 BS.

Caves for taking copies with the help of artists. Abanindranath at the instance of the Sister Nivedita of Rk-V, sent some of his students including Nandalal Bose there with the hope that they themselves would be benefited by copying these brilliant art-works of ancient India. It should be mentioned that during the time of Locke several students were also sent to Bhubaneswar for preparing casts for architectural and sculpture works at Government expense for the book *Antiquities of Orissa* of Dr. Rajendra Lala Mitra.

The overall change in the instruction of the students of the Fine art section produced perceptible results within a few years. The art productions of Abanindranath on the Indian ideals had been hitherto appreciated by several art critics and connoisseurs. We have already seen that E. B. Havell commented favourably on them in *The Studio* of London as far back as in 1903/04. But in India it was not so at the beginning. It was due to his insight and patriotic fervour that Ramananda Chatterjee started giving publicity to the outstanding pictures of Abanindranath in his Bengali monthly *Prabasi*. Sister Nivedita of the Rk-Vivekananda deeply engaged in the study of Indian religion and culture also immediately perceived the inner beauty and high ideal expressed in the paintings of Abanindranath. She joined hands with Ramananda Chatterjee in interpreting the new cult manifested in them. O. C. Ganguly then a junior and now an octogenarian also took pains at that early stage to introduce these art productions to the Bengali reading public. Since 1907 Ramananda Chatterjee began to print them in his English monthly *The Modern Review*, started in January 1907. With them joined Dr. A. Coomaraswami, the renowned art critic and connoisseur and keeper of the Indian collection, Boston Museum, U.S.A. of the day who became the exponent of the high ideals of art reflected in the paintings of Abanindranath and his school. He contributed many valuable articles on them to the various journals, foreign & Indian including *The Modern Review*. Students of Abanindranath headed by Nandalal Bose followed the ideals set in by him punctiliously and their art did not fail to receive appreciation and approbation from their quarters. Ramananda Chatterjee began to reproduce their paintings regularly since early 1900. The role of *Prabasi* and *The Modern Review* in helping people to realise correctly the true import of Indian art cannot be spoken too highly of. The art which at one time had been disparagingly criticised by a section of the influential people was now being almost universally accepted.

Abanindranath served the school as officiating Principal for two years. In early 1908 Havell who had been at home on sick leave was 'pronounced by the Medical Board unfit for further service in India' (*Report for 1907-08*.) Though Abanindranath officiated as Principal very efficiently during his absence still he was not considered by the

authorities to be the permanent incumbent. Proposals were submitted for appointment of a new Principal.

One word about Mr Havell. Havell's activities were not confined to the school only. He wrote books and contributed articles to important journals on Indian art. Architecture and culture also attracted his notice and imagination. While in England he undertook of his own accord to interpret and explain the high ideals of Indian art, architecture and culture and wrote many treatises on them. Even today he is remembered with profound love and deep respect by the Indians. After his death on 31st December, 1934 some of his admirers paid homage to him in articles both in English and Bengali. O. C. Ganguly captioned his paper as "Havell: The English Prophet of Indian Nationalism" which speaks volumes for Havell's life and work as well as the ideas for which he virtually dedicated his life. The cause of India's fall and way of rising out of this slough were rightly couched by Havell in these brief lines :

"No nation has ever grown to greatness by compromising. India has sunk in the scale of nations because she has been false to her highest ideals and India will rise again when she holds up for herself and for humanity higher ones than Modern Europe now brings her." (Quoted in *The Modern Review*, February 1935)

THE FOURTH PHASE THE HAVELLAN SYSTEM CONTINUED

Percy Brown (b. 22 September, 1871) succeeded Havell, as Principal and took charge of the school from the officiating Principal Abanindranath Tagore on 12 January, 1909. He had already served the Mayo School of Industrial Art as Principal and also as Curator of the Central Museum, Lahore, since 1899. The authorities of the Delhi Darbar Exhibition requisitioned his services and appointed him its Assistant Director temporarily from 1902. He worked as such for about a year. During his stay at Lahore Percy Brown learned Persian and also passed the vernacular examination in Urdu. This acquired knowledge and the local environment of Islamic culture greatly inspired him in his later research work in Moghul painting. He in this way imbibed a love for Moghul painting which no doubt formed an integral part of Indian Art. His activities in the Calcutta School of Art and the Art Gallery were not a little influenced by this attitude during the early years of his service here.

Abanindranath who had been the officiating Principal during the absence of Mr. Havell had acted upon the reorientation scheme initiated by the latter. In the fourth Q. Report, 1907-08 to 1911-12 we have the following statement :

"The process of denationalisation has been arrested. The policy of installing Indian Art in the place of supremacy which it ought to occupy in an Indian Art School, and of inspiring the minds of the students with a desire to follow Indian ideals, has been continued during the quinquennium under review."

The report further adds : "The main function of the School has been declared to be to improve the arts and industries of the country. It was formerly divided into an Industrial Art side and a Fine Art side. On the Industrial Art side good was done by the Advanced Drawing Class and the importance of keeping Indian ideals constantly in view was acknowledged and acted upon"

Percy Brown, the new Principal did not disturb the process of nationalisation. He however introduced some radical changes in the school just after his taking office in 1909. The entire course of study was divided into five departments—(1) Elementary, (2) Industrial Art, (3) Drafting, (4) Teaching and (5) Fine Art. Every student had to first join the elementary department where he had to work for two years to qualify himself to select any of the other four departments. Each of these four departments had a curriculum of three years.

Industrial Art Department had also four sections—(1) Leather-working, (2) Wood-Engraving, (3) Modelling and (4) Wood Carving. Work in these departments began in full swing and satisfactory progress was noticed within a short time. Students were employed for the first time to prepare Industrial Art Pattern Books for Dacca, Sylhet, Dhaka and Bengal Ivory Carving. The annual report for 1909-10 was written by Munshi Gholam Hussain was entrusted with the charge of preparing the book on the 'interesting' and 'artistic' side of the Industrial Art Department.

The Teachers' Training department which had been very popular was by now adversely affected due to the new regulations introduced in the Matriculation examination by the Council of Education in 1909-10. The Principal writes: "The Teachers' Department has been adversely affected by the attitude of the Council of Education towards Drawing, as it is thought that there will not be any demand for teachers of this subject. The Principal writes: "The Principal writes that there were three advanced students under P. Brown's supervision. Two of them are helping the teaching staff of the school. The third is on leave since the absence on leave of the Vice-Principal, and the school is in employment in the United Provinces." (4th Q. Report)

The Fine Art Department showed marked progress since 1909. Under the zealous instruction of Abanindranath students, inspired with national ideas and ideals, drew subjects of their paintings from Indian history and mythology. Our ancient epics the *Ramayana* and the *Mahabharata* were the chief subjects of their paintings.

varata, the Puranas as well as Sanskrit literature of old together with the natural scenes of various places and types supplied enough subjects for their paintings. Their progress was publicly noticed in the exhibition held in February 1910 under the auspices of the Indian Society of Oriental Art. The *Report* for 1909-10 also writes : "a very impressive collection of paintings in the Indian style, contributed mainly by the student of the department was displayed" "In connection with the Fine Art Department" the above Report says, "a special feature has also been made of the preparation of the indigenous pigments. The results of this action are being watched with some interest, as the old Indian colours are remarkable for their brilliancy and permanence."

Studies of oriental subjects in the Indian Style were being produced regularly. As I have said already *Prabasi* and the *Modern Review* began to publish the paintings of the advanced students of the Fine Art Department like those of their *Guru* Abanindranath since 1909. Articles on the technique, treatment and subject matter of these studies were also being published both in English and Bengali from the pen of Abanindranath and some of his prominent students, such as Asst Kumar Halder and Samarendra Nath Gupta. In order to pick up native art talents which were wasting uncared for, at places beyond the reach of the school, a very important step during the session 1909-10 was taken. The report for the year refers to this matter in the following lines :

"Steps have been taken to extend the system of local scholarships and sanction has been accorded to the issue of a circular to all officers, local bodies, societies and communities likely to be interested in the movement. It was felt that much native talent for art in some form or other lies in places at present beyond reach of the school without means of pursuing its aspiration. A circular pointing out the aims and objects of the school and certain important details was freely circulated, with the suggestion that it might be possible to provide a small scholarship from public funds to any very deserving youth who showed special aptitude for drawing or an artistic handicraft."

We find in the 4th *Q Report* that response from different quarters however small it might be was readily received and 'the Mysore Government, several District Boards and Municipalities, and the Bettiah Estate have awarded scholarships to boys of their districts to enable them to undergo an art training in this institution'

The reorganised Fine Art Department gradually became popular and the number of students also increased from year to year. The first batch of students under the instruction of Abanindranath, as far as we know left the school after completion of their full course in 1910-11. They may be given the honour of being the pioneers in the diffusion of oriental art in Indian style amongst the ordinary people. They derived their inspiration it is needless to say, mainly from Abanindranath.



Giron Palace at Sekundora
Water colour drawing
author unknown.

Others followed and also rendered yeomen's service to the cause of a revival of oriental art.

Principal Brown, as keeper of the Art Gallery (which had been laid down by Mr. Howell and gave prominence to the section of oriental art). He however rearranged the art gallery to suit the exigencies and needs of the time in 1911. On the 1st April, 1911 the gallery was combined with the Art and Craft of the Indian Museum to form its art section. The art gallery was re-organised into three sections—(1) Fine art, (2) Handicraft and Craft and Industries. The 4th Q. Report says: "The Fine Art section includes the finest specimens of Hindu and Muhammadan paintings in water colours and a few paintings on ivory. The hardware section includes the best specimens of Indian Art in metal and leather works, pottery, jewellery and wood carving. The textile fabrics are divided into woven and embroidered articles. It is hoped that, when thus re-stocked and re-arranged the gallery will be able better to fulfil its purpose of marking the future and directing the imagination of the students in the direction of indigenous art."

A fresh purchase committee was formed for the Art Gallery. On the committee sat, besides two Swedish commissioners, N. S. Datta, Gaganendranath Tagore, Abanindranath Tagore and O. C. Ganguly. Sir John Woodroff was its president. Percy Brown also acted as the Secretary to the Committee. It may be remembered here that Blant and Abanindranath were also the first secretaries of the Indian Society of oriental art.

Works in various departments continued successfully. Special emphasis used to be given as before to the department of painting. Abanindranath was the guiding angel in this department. The work went on smoothly for some time. In the middle of June 1912 Principal Brown took long leave on furlough for the time year. During this period Abanindranath the Vice-Principal acted as Principal. He returned in April 1912 and could not join the school before the end of the year. During this period Narayan Bose during the absence of both the Principals acted as Vice-Principal. Principal officiated as Principal and Vice-Principal. In January, 1913 Abanindranath took charge of the school as Principal. He held the office till the end of the year. In October, that year. Though the Principal and Vice-Principal had hitherto acted in proper co-operation, there was a marked change of attitude manifest. Abanindranath manifested in the love of his students. He held his students as disciples and not as subjects. His attitude was very much different of that of the Principal Brown. The former allowed the students to work themselves even outside the class rooms and beyond the precincts of the school. They in their way very often did not conform to the code of rules usually expected to be followed by the students. Principal Brown had a very different outlook on discipline from that of Abanindranath and objected to this sort of conduct from time to time.

These differences between Brown and Abanindranath, it is said, took an acute form and the latter was compelled to take long leave on Medical grounds. Abanindranath ultimately resigned in the middle of 1915.

It may sound paradoxical, but none the less it is true that the Government School of Art took the initiative in the propagation of the Neo-Indian Art popularly known as oriental art throughout the country by making arrangements for systematic instruction. The school rendered immense service not only in changing our outlook but also in moulding our national life and character. There were also three other schools of art of considerable standing in Calcutta, namely —

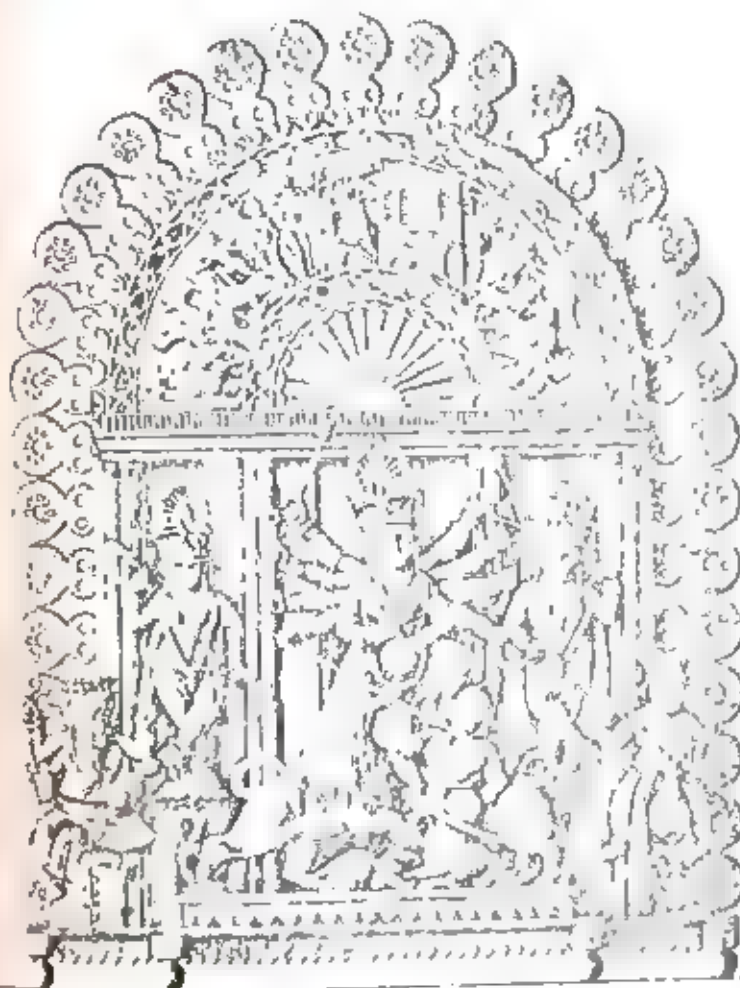
1. The Albert Temple of Science and School of Art. ()
2. The Indian Art School and
3. The Jubilee Art Academy.

But none of them fulfilled the mission for which the school of art was striving for years although these were all managed non-officially. It is interesting to note the comments of Mr. Cumming specially on the Albert Temple of Science, in his Industrial Report. We find here stated as follows: "Mr. Cumming in his Industrial Report, speaking of the Albert Temple of Science, points out the inconsistency of using European casts, drawing books, and designs, in an institution which prides itself of being 'Swadeshi'". All the three schools were engaged in Teaching, Drawing, Engraving, Moulding and Lithography.

A few words should be said here about some of the prominent students of the Government School of Art of this period. After completion of their course they continued to work individually in private capacity for some years. Some of them moved throughout the country and even beyond, for inculcation of oriental art amongst the new learners. Rabindranath Tagore, an ardent and enthusiastic exponent of the neo-art, organised the Visva Bharati Kala Bhavan in 1919 first with Asit Kumar Halder and later with Nandalal Bose both of the Government School of Art and Surendra Nath Kar of 'Vichitra'. The Kala Bhavan supplied teachers and instructors of the neo-art to very many art institutions and even to the Government School of Art. Asit Kumar Halder and Surendra Nath Gupta respectively as the Principal of the Lucknow School of Art and the Mayo School of Art, Lahore took up in themselves the task of inculcating this neo-art in all its aspects to the students of these provinces. Surendra Nath Dey did the same in Jaipur as Principal of the Jaipur Art School. The famous Andhra Janapada Kalasala had the privilege of having at its head Promod Kumar Chatterjee first a student of the Government School of Art and later of the society of Abanindranath. Jamini Ranjan Roy, better known as Jamini Roy and Jatindra Kumar Sen were each an institution in them-

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selves. Jamini Roy revived and revitalised one of the main branches of our Folk Art viz the *Pata Shilpa* which had hitherto been neglected. Jatindra Kumar had left an indelible stamp on the development of commercial art in this country. K. Venkatappa of Mysore a favourite student of Abanindranath took the pains of popularising the oriental art throughout that State. He had his headquarters at Bangalore. These pupils were and still are the torch bearers of the Neo Indian Art as taught in the parent institution of Calcutta.

One point should be stressed here. Since the inception of the Indian Society of Oriental Art, it conducted its affairs in close cooperation with the Government School of Art and sometimes, both these institutions worked as complementary to each other. Principal Brown, after taking office was attracted to this institution for its extracurricular activities. He found the society as the meeting ground of European and Indian artist and connoisseurs most of whom were not connected or associated with the Government School of Art. Brown took so much interest in its activities that the society once sent him to Java to take photographs of the monuments and temples at Borobudur, which were splendid specimens of Buddhist architecture. These photographs were considered a valuable treasure of the society. We don't know how long Principal Brown kept up his connection with the society. It perhaps terminated with the retirement of the Vice-Principal, Abanindranath, its founder secretary.

Abanindranath left the School in the middle of 1915 for good. The Indian society of oriental art had hitherto been doing a creditable thing some of the best specimens of art and craft and exhibited them from time to time for the education and edification of the public. Since his retirement, the Society became the centre of art-activity of Abanindranath. Many talented students from far and near veered round Abanindranath to have instruction in oriental art which gradually developed into the teaching department of the society. Many of the later day celebrated artists who fairly established and popularised the style and technique of Abanindranath in painting throughout India and even beyond had their full or partial instruction here, amongst whom we find Mukul Chandra Dey, Debi Prasad Roy Chowdhury, Rameshwar Ukil, Lalit Mohan Sen, Kshitindranath Mazumder, Bireswar Sen, Chaitanyaudev Chatterjee, Bratindranath Tagore, Charu Roy and Chintamani Kar the Principal of the Calcutta Art College. Sculpture was also added to the curriculum and Giridhari Malapatra a noted sculptor of Orissa joined the Society as a teacher at the instance of Abanindranath.

Years of Conflict and Compromise

It appears that Hari Narayan Bose, the Head Master officiated as Vice-Principal for about a year (1915-16). Jamini Prakash Ganguly (b. 3rd November, 1876) was appointed permanent Vice-Principal on

10th June, 1916. Like Abanindranath, a relation of his Jamini Prakash was also a student of the artist Palmer and privately continued his study for years. He had already made a name as an artist specially as a painter of landscape and portrait. Later he won celebrity as a first rank portrait painter. But he was a staunch follower of the European form and technique and nurtured as such in all his paintings showed remarkable touch of this style.

Havell had created a new tradition for the school of art by eschewing altogether the European style and technique and introducing in its place the Indian one—the ideal being always based on traditions and history of the country. In Abanindranath we have found the fulfilment of endeavours of Havell to a large extent and he as the Vice-Principal followed Havell both in letter and spirit. Abanindranath worked with Principal Brown for a little over six years and followed the ideal with as much warmth as he had done before. But with the appointment of Jamini Prakash we find a new turn of affairs in the offing. As much as we know from records Principal Brown did not interfere with the ideal and method of teaching pursued by Abanindranath. This time too, it appears that Principal Brown depended more or less on his Vice-Principal Jamini Prakash so far as teaching was concerned. Jamini Prakash reintroduced the western form and technique in the curriculum to be followed by the students. It was perhaps through his initiative and by the approval of the Principal Brown that the Fine Art Department was divided into two sections or classes very much distinct from each other, viz. (i) Fine Art and (ii) Indian Painting. The Fine Art Section or class introduced portrait painting, still life painting and full figure painting. Jamini Prakash as Vice-Principal not only supervised all the classes of the school but also particularly conducted this Fine Art Department. The name of Jamini Prakash was well known to artists and connoisseurs and the reintroduction of the European method under him served as a great attraction and allurements to many a students of other schools. One such was Atul Bose the renowned portrait painter of later day and some time also lecturer and Principal of the Government School of Art, Calcutta.

The Indian Art Section or class was placed solely in charge of Lala Iswari Prasad who conducted it loyally and faithfully. But under the changed circumstances Lala Iswari Prasad could hardly hold his own. Students of this class also dwindled in number. A sincere artist and colleague of Abanindranath, Iswari Prasad now failed to receive that amount of co-operation and support from the high quarters which was largely needed for the prosecution of his work and teaching successfully in our national style and technique.

The disparity of the Fine Art and the Indian Art section did not take much time to attract the notice of art lovers. Could not these two

classes be coordinated and improved? A section of them began to give thought to the matter. Painting lines along western and eastern might be developed simultaneously if a liberal approach were made by those placed in authority. A new idea was also developing about art education and coordination in eastern and western patterns. The seventh *Q. Review*, as distinct from the local *Q. Report* dealt with this point from an all India outlook. That the higher educational authorities were thinking of the prospects for readjustment or balancing between these two processes is reflected in the excerpts of the above Review given below.

"... with a view to teaching good art (which after all is presumably the main object, whether the art be denominated western, eastern or by any other name), it is necessary so far as possible to discard the conventions which are apt to interfere with the production of the best form. The shortcomings of the Indian methods must be corrected by studies from the life upon western methods. Decadent tendencies require an infusion of energy and accuracy, without undue influence on the traditional bent on Indian learner in the matter of essential principles. For Indian art in the proper sense of the word is a matter of principle and not of mere manner; and, if the spirit is there and can find the expression, the art will remain Indian whatever be the medium or technique of that expression. It is equally necessary to shake off the trammels of western conventions with a view to placing the feet of the student upon the path of progress and building up a school of living rather than of imitating art. This point is apt to be forgotten by critics who observe a class of Indian students drawing from a model in accordance with the canons of proportion, perspective and anatomy. Instruction in the more modern methods of western art will here help rather than hinder the Indian student." (Principal, Bombay School of Art.) The Principal of the Lahore School says that the whole system of teaching drawing in that institution has been brought into line of western methods as they are now, which are much more in sympathy with eastern traditions than is the old South Kensington system of mechanical copying of nameless forms and decorative pattern charts which had been rooted in the country for forty years. While therefore instruction in according to the western methods (if needed that term can properly be used) forms an integral part of the course in these schools, the aim as stated in the Madras report, is to conduct them as much as possible with a view to the preservation of Indian art. As a matter of fact the more advanced student is generally allowed to follow his own bent as in the Calcutta School".

Calcutta School of Art already earned a distinction in the field of art education in India. But the coordination between the eastern and western form and technique was yet to be effected here and the above discussion was certainly a pointer towards a synthesis between these two methods. Incidentally it may be mentioned that due to the untiring efforts of the Government School of Art, Calcutta a tradition in art in

India had been developed by this time which may be called Indian. J. A. Richey writes in *Bih Q. Review* (Progress of Education in India) "The Calcutta School has been instrumental in creating a school of Indian Painting the reputation of which extends beyond the confines of India."

Apart from the painting section work continued in other departments of applied art. Students in these departments too showed considerable progress. After completion of their studies they received certificates as usual and were mostly absorbed in official and non-official concerns. Works of the advanced students was recognised by Governmental authorities, and in 1921 at the time of the visit of the Prince of Wales to Calcutta their services were requisitioned by them. We find that the staff and the students of the School decorated the route from the Government House (now Raj Bhawan) to the Victoria Memorial on this occasion. During the previous year (1920) the school sustained a serious loss by the death of the Head Master Hari Narayan Bose. Hari Narayan was one of the ablest and oldest members of the staff. Besides being the Head Master he discharged his duties several times very efficiently as officiating Vice-Principal and even once as Principal.

Lala Iswari Prashad acted as Head Master since 22nd January, 1920 temporarily after the death of Hari Narayan. The post of Headmaster was abolished by this time and a new non-Gazetted post of Head Assistant teacher was created. A permanent incumbent for the post was recruited from the instructing staff. It was T. Aroomagam Achary (b October 1875) of Madras who had been appointed teacher of Modelling so far back as in 1899.

Importance of commercial art was being felt at this time. The school authorities conscious of the possibilities of this branch opened a Commercial Art Class temporarily for two years in the first instance in December 1925. Kushal Mukherji an ex-student of the school was entrusted with this department. He had studied the art of poster design in England for several years. However he left the school in the year following and went to Jaipur as Principal of the Jaipur School of Art. The charge of this department fell upon one Prahlad Karmakar. The department although originally sanctioned for two years continued several years on temporary basis and subsequently made permanent. The remunerative prospects of this section attracted talented students and we learn from an article by Satish Chandra Sinha in *Our Magazine* for March 1932. "One boy Pramatha Samaddar, while still a student in commercial section won the second prize Rs. 200/- in the Indian State Railway Poster Competition in 1929 and another students Phony Sanyal stood first in the same competition two years later (in 1931)".

I have already referred to the five departments as classified by Principal Brown. A student required five years to complete his course

of studies. But gradually according to some students of mid-twenties it was made six years instead of five. The elementary course being increased to three years in place of two. It was perhaps done unofficially. Something like the Monitor system developed in course of time. After completion of their studies some students were picked up for being Monitors who helped the students in their study under the guidance of the teachers of respective departments. This was also a private arrangement, the Government having no financial risk or liability. This system reminds us of the one introduced by Locke in the early seventies in this school. Advanced students used to be appointed Scholar-teachers like the Monitors with this difference that the former received some monthly allowance for their service while the latter the Monitors rendered service honorarily. They were however provided with seats in the School Hostel run by the school authorities.

To sum up, Percy Brown served the school as Principal since January 1909 upto 1927. This long period of his service may be divided into two parts. From 1909 to 1915 he had as his principal coadjutor Abanindranath Tagore and during the later period from 1916 to 1927 Jamini Prakash Ganguly. So far as the method of work was concerned Principal Brown did not very much interfere. During the former period his let-alone policy allowed Abanindranath to pursue the ideal assiduously so ably and vigorously laid down by Principal Havell. But as we have found, differences between the Principal and the Vice-Principal came to a head mainly on the question of discipline, the latter had to resign in 1915. Principal Brown's relation with Vice-Principal Jamini Prakash as we find in the records was all along cordial and in his case too the former's non-interfering attitude proved very much helpful to pursue his own way. It was for this reason that the western form and technique of art could not only be reintroduced by Jamini Prakash but got a sound foot hold in the curriculum of studies of the school. Efforts for readjustment between the eastern and the western line of work with the Indian ideal in the forefront commenced somewhat indifferently during Brown's regime. Principal Brown treated his students with utmost sympathy and cordiality. He considered the students as his sole 'charge' and whenever any difficulty or danger appeared to raise its head in his way Brown stood against it and protected the students with loving care.

The services of Principal Brown to the cause of Indian art however lay also in other fields. His love for Moghul art led him to research, in Moghul, and mediæval systems of Painting. His books, on the subject are considered authoritative even today. We may for example cite his treatises on *the Indian Paintings Under the Moghuls*, *Picturesque Nepal and Indian Architecture in 2 Volumes* (1924). The Government School of Art will ever be proud of this scholar-Principal. After him opens a new chapter in the life of the school.

THE FIFTH PHASE

DAWN OF A NEW ERA: EFFECTIVE IMPROVEMENT IN ADMINISTRATION AND TEACHING

After the departure of Percy Brown, Vice Principal Jamini Prakash took over the charge of the School and served as officiating Principal for a little over six months. He had acted in this capacity previously for several times. The authorities this time, too, were in search of a suitable candidate for the post of Principal and found a very worthy one in Mukul Chandra Dey, a brilliant student and staunch follower of Abanindranath Tagore. He had his early education in Rabindranath's Brahmacharya Vidyalyaya at Santiniketan and came in close contact with the poet. His aptitude for art manifested itself even while he was at Santiniketan. He later received his instruction in art at the Indian Society of Oriental Art of which Abanindranath Tagore was the guiding spirit. Mukul Chandra had also his schooling in art in foreign lands. He accompanied the poet Rabindranath to the United States in 1916 and got admitted to the Art Academy at Chicago where he continued his studies in Etching work for some time. Mukul Dey's prolonged stay in Great Britain also gave him enough opportunity to acquaint himself with the Western art movements. He won the distinctions of A.R.C.A. (London), M.C.S.F. (U.S.A.), F.R.S.A. (London), etc. His appointment as Principal heralded dawn of a new era in the life of the school of art. Mastered in the oriental system, Mukul Chandra's personal and intimate contact with that of the Western widened his outlook on art and these experiences of his infused new strength and vigour into both the Western and Oriental system of art education in this country.

Mukul Chandra Dey, popularly known as Mukul Dey (b. 23 July, 1895) was appointed Principal of the school on 11 July, 1928 on a contract basis for five years. It should be said to our credit that he became the first full fledged Indian Principal of the School. Jamini Prakash handed over charge to the new Principal and after about a month went on leave with effect from 20 August, 1928. He later prolonged his leave even without pay till 3 November, 1931 when he resigned.

Immediately after taking office Principal Dey set his hands to reforming both the administrative and academic matters. He abolished the Monitor system which was not only unauthorised but led to complications. His circular to the students to have with each a small drawing board for convenience of their study was taken exception to by the advanced students of the school. Some other matters of reform were also not to their liking. There had already been student unrest in Calcutta due to political and other extra-academic reasons. Principal Dey faced with troubles even in the initial stage and had to seek the

assistance of Rabindranath (who resided with him in August 1929), Abanindranath and even Acharya Prafulla Chandra. Since 1928-29 students were being admitted only after a preliminary test. As we find in the *Q. Report* for 1927-28 to 1931-32 "The course extends from five to six years and is divided into an elementary and an advanced section. There are eight departments; Indian Painting, Fine Art (art taught on European models), Commercial art wood engraving, lithography, draftsmanship, clay modelling and teachership.

"Each department has an elementary and an advanced section, but different departments sometimes have a common elementary section"

The school curriculum was gradually reorganised to suit the needs of the time. Principal Dey adopted measures which proved efficacious from the very beginning. The heretofore temporary, commercial art department was made permanent as this branch of art already giving proof of its importance and usefulness. Teaching of lithography was made practical in its printing aspect. Each student had to print his own work.

It was for the first time that the school quarterly magazine called *Our Magazine* started in October 1931 and served as a regular forum for reproduction of the selected works of the staff and students. Talks and lantern lectures were also introduced by this time. Holding of exhibitions was another feature during the first quinquennium of Principal Dey's tenure of office. They numbered as many as eleven, and some were of historic importance. More on this I shall say later on.

Effective reform by augmenting the number of teachers on the staff was deemed necessary. But this could not be done at once, and the delay, thus caused landed Principal Dey into troubles even at the beginning of his regime. T. A. Achary, the Hd. Asst. Teacher took leave early in 1929, prior to retirement. Principal Dey seized this opportunity and arranged for appointment of Ramendranath Chakraverty (b. 25 October, 1902) to his post. Ramendranath, an ex-student of this institution had his further instruction in art in the *Vesva Bharati Kala Bhavan* under direct supervision of Nandalal Bose. In him Indian art found an enthusiastic "labourer". Ramendranath excelled in certain branches of Indian art and already made a name as an artist of this school. He however took pains, like his guru Nandalal to introduce modern subjects of Indian life in his art productions, specially wood cuts. Kashal Kumar Mukherji, Head Designer, resigned his post with effect from 10 July, 1929; and Satish Chandra Sinha was appointed to the above post with effect from 9 August, 1929.

The fine art department had been solely in charge of the veteran artist Vice-Principal Jamini Prakash. His prolonged absence on leave produced some sort of discontent amongst the students of fine art. No stop-gap arrangement could be made. Advanced students of the

class naturally had to suffer seriously and for the removal of their legitimate grievances they took a course which in the opinion of the authority was not at all desirable. They organised a strike and succeeded in inducing their friends of the other classes to join them. To combat this serious turn of affairs Principal Dey closed the school *sine die* with the approval of the Government even a month before the summer vacation of 1929. But we find by the end of 1930 another strike was organised, third of its kind.

But at this time due to the strong attitude of the government the strike did not last long. Principal Dey took some drastic steps. The students' hostel was closed down. Some of the students were expelled. One of those students Kabi Kinkar Ghosh Dastidar, now a known artist went to Madras as the doors of the Calcutta school were no longer opened to him. Debi Prasad Roy Choudhury was the Principal of the Government School of Art, Madras. He was kind and courageous enough to take in Kabi Kinkar as a student of his school. After over three months' vacation students came back and joined their respective classes on some stringent conditions. Each and every student was admitted fresh with re-admission fee of Rupee one and a caution money of Rupees ten. Every one had to give an undertaking to follow the rules and regulations of the school. Atul Bose the celebrated artist and painter of Western style was taken in for the fine art department just after the school reopened. The grievances of the students of fine art class was removed and they all welcomed Bose as a happy substitute for Jamini Prakash. Principal Dey began to procure reproductions of beautiful specimens of European Painting ancient and modern and hung them on the wall of the class room as also on the other walls including stair case for display. This was meant to serve two purposes. (i) to provide models for students, specially of the fine art department, as well as (ii) to convince the staff and the students of the importance of both the systems Western and Oriental. Principal Dey had the conviction that "All great art being one, he does not believe in dividing art into water-tight compartments such as 'Eastern' and 'Western'. The preliminary training seeks to ensure a seeing eye and a sure hand."

Atul Bose's stay in the school was however shortened as he sailed for England on a commission from the Government of India to prepare copies of the Royal Portraits at the Windsor Castle and Buckingham Palace for the Viceroy's and Commander-in-Chief's House in New Delhi. The students again had to suffer for some time and raised vocal protest. But all these calmed down with the appointment of the famous artist Basanta Kumar Ganguly of European experience on 15 April, 1930 as teacher of 'Fine art'.

To revitalise other departments several fresh appointments and changes were also made in the instructing staff. Manindra Bhushan Gupta (b. June 1898) also of the Visva Bharati Kala Bhavan, was

brought in to fill up the vacancy caused by the retirement of Santosh Kumar Das. He had attained considerable fame as head of the department of art, Ananda College, Colombo, Ceylon. Late Iswari Prasad of the Indian painting department retired on superannuation on 16 April, 1933. Satyendranath Banerjee also of the Kala Bhavan was appointed on 4 July, 1932 to the department. For the commercial art department which had by now become permanent Satish Chandra Sinha was selected as Head Designer and teacher-in-charge. He was assisted by Prahlad Chandra Karmakar who had been engaged for this department long since. Sushil Chandra Sen, an ex-student of the School was given charge of the Lithography department, some time later on 12th August, 1936 vice Upendranath Mukherjee the veteran artist in this line retired.

The instructing staff thus replenished and the grievances of the students removed, the work of school of Art progressed with renewed zeal and vigour. Principal Dey, as the presiding authority, succeeded in generating a healthy atmosphere. And a happy coordination was brought about between the various departments. During his long stay in Europe Mukul Dey became conversant with the modern tendencies of European art and the new methods that were introduced in the western form and technique of painting. The ardent advocates and followers of Western style in this country almost ignored these new developments and pursued the antiquated western line in their art productions. Principal Dey for the first time introduced modern methods in the fine art department with commendable results. Students produced paintings which attracted immediate attention of the connoisseurs and art lovers. Amongst them some have attained considerable fame in their life and are serving art institutions of various categories including this parent body. To name only a few, I may mention Sushil Sen, now Vice-Principal of the art College Radha Charan Bageh, lecturer, Santiniketan. Samar Ghosh, Zainul Abedin (now Principal, College of Art, Dacca), Kishori Roy and Satyen Ghosal—the last two now on the teaching staff of the college.*

The importance and usefulness of commercial art had become perceptible to the general public by this time and attracted serious students, some of whom are now famous commercial artists. Amongst them we find Ananda Manshi, Makhan Datta Gupta and Jagadish Roy now in charge of this department of the art college.

The Indian painting department underwent a thorough reorientation under the direct supervision of Principal Dey. This department had been at the time of Havell & Tagore, engaged in painting subjects from ancient Indian history, mythology and literature. Subsequently, specially in the twenties, the department occupied itself mainly in making copies of the mediævals Rajput & Mughal miniatures and decorations. But from now on, under the direction of Principal Dey and with the

* Shri Kishori Roy died on the 17th December 1963

assistance of Ramendranath, Head Assistant Teacher, the students engaged themselves in depicting original themes, drawing largely on our every day life. They were showing greater affection for subjects concerning the humble and the lowly of our community—carters, scavengers, cobblers, fishermen, peasants, paddy pounders, folk dancers, bustee people, etc., etc. Without minimising the credit of Principal Dey in introducing these new ways of approach we may perhaps safely state that those productions reflected our changing national outlook and mental attitude at the time. We find even in 1934 that a thoughtful section was also welcoming this approach to the reorientation of Indian painting so far as the subject matter was concerned. In this connection I may here refer to the paper (The Subject of a Picture) contributed to the *Amrita Bazar Patrika* of 20th November, 1934 by Indu Rakshit, then an advanced student, and now a lecturer of this Indian Painting department of the art college. He wrote *inter alia*, "... the modern method has formed a definite school, of style and technique of its own, gradually advancing leaving its old and obsolete mythological temperament and stepping into the present day Indian life."

Prominent students of this department of Indian painting included besides Indu Rakshit, Jyotirindra Roy (now in Bombay), the late Abdul Moin, Heramba Ganguly, Biresb Ganguly and Sudhir Munshi, as also Manik Lal Banerjee and Anulya Gopal Sen Sarma both on the present staff of the College.

One point should also be mentioned here. Etching was a special forte with Principal Dey. Though it was not added to the curriculum Principal Dey himself privately arranged for inculcation of this branch of art amongst the students, in his own studio at the college.

During the quinquennium ending 1931-32 many events took place some of which I have already narrated. Exhibitions of paintings in the school premises served as a great impetus to the students for pursuing their work in right earnest. The Annual Exhibitions turned into a regular feature. Art exhibits included works of the students along with the staff. Appreciative comments on the exhibits appeared in public journals from the pen of such eminent art critics and connoisseurs as Professor Suniti Kumar Chatterjee and this was no doubt a great incentive for the students to pursue their line of work. Besides these annual displays there were organised special exhibitions, too, Principal Dey himself took initiative in holding two other exhibitions—one of the paintings of Jamini Roy and the other of Rabindranath's in the premises of the school. Our folk art *Patashilpa* as revived and revitalised by Jamini Roy was as far as we know, brought for the first time to the public view at this exhibition opened on 30.9.29. The exhibition of Rabindranath's paintings opened on 20th February, 1932, and received wide publicity and appreciation. Some other exhibition

by noted foreign artists, both from the East and the West were also arranged here from time to time by Principal Dey.

Number of students on the rolls on 31st March, 1927 was 335. But due to various reasons it dwindled to 237 on 31st March, 1932. The principal fixed the number at 300 in order to ensure proper and efficient instruction. The economy drive was supreme at the time and the Government reduced the annual grant to the school by more than one-third in 1931-32. The post of vice-principal was abolished. A new scale of pay for the teachers by decreasing the maximum ceiling was introduced. According to the Indianisation scheme an Indian Principal in Dey had been recruited no doubt but his service as I have already said was on a five year contract basis with far less pay. The contract period was over with the end of this quinquennium and a fresh contract was entered into. But we find Principal Dey was taken in as permanent incumbent on 11th July, 1934. The Principal no longer belonged to the All India Service cadre. His status was lowered to that of the provincial Educational Service.

The one year teachership certificate course was abolished. By 1933-34 it was revived and reorganised as a three year (post diploma) course. Students who secured first division marks in the final examination were only eligible for this newly established department. This department would not possibly have seen the light of day during the economy drive had not Principal Dey taken pains to run the department without incurring any additional expenditure. The first batch of students were all from the Indian painting department. Three years' course was subsequently reduced to two years. This department continues as a two year teachership course. As regards three other departments wood-engraving, clay modelling and draughtsmanship something should be said here. Wood-engraving was already languishing as the modern process of half tone block supplanted it in the field. Therefore, the demand for wood-engravers was far less than formerly and students were scarcely attracted to this class. The clay-modelling class did not also fare well. According to Principal Dey the craft of clay modelling was "similarly unable to do any thing to impress or improve the potters' craft which produced clay figures and dolls at places like Kumartuli in Calcutta and Krishnanagar in Nadia." These were also reorganised.

Under the Vice-Chancellorship of Shyama Prasad Mukherjee (1934-38) a new optional subject (Drawing, Painting and Appreciation, of Fine Art) was added to the revised syllabus of the Matriculation Examination for the women students. Principal Dey had already felt the need of making proper arrangements of art education for girls in the school. It was very difficult also to find art teachers for the girls schools. Principal Dey sought to supply this desideratum by introducing co-education in the school in 1939 and we find that girls students

readily seized this opportunity and got admitted into the school. Apurba Roy, one of the first batch of girl students who joined the school this year is now a teacher of this College. It should be stated here that two or three non-Bengali girl students prosecuted their studies in this school formerly although there was no arrangement for co-education prior to Principal Dey.

Principal Dey's regime was marked by another event unique in its character. Ramendranath Chakravorty, Head Assistant Teacher, who had already won distinction by the publication of a collection of wood cuts "in a handsome portfolio, which formed the first artistic production of this nature" (Principal 'Quon Q. Report 1927-32), took leave of the school for two years and sailed for England in 1937. He continued his further art studies in the Slade School, a famous centre of art education in London. During his absence Manindra Bhusan Gupta officiated as Head Assistant Teacher. Ramendranath rejoined the school after the period was over and remained in his former post for several years more. Principal Dey took leave on medical grounds in 1943. He did not join and retired before time. Principal Dey's services to the School of Art were many and various, which the reader had already come to know. His publications are—(1) Twelve Portraits (sketch drawings with brief accounts), (2) My pilgrimage to Ajanta and Bagh; and (3) Barbhun Terracottas. The last named is a recent work published by the Lalit Kala Akademi.

With effect from 20 June, 1943 Ramendranath was appointed as officiating Principal and he served in this capacity till 1946 when accepted the post of Senior Art Master, Delhi Polytechnic and left for Delhi. It may be mentioned that Satish Chandra Sinha became the Head Assistant Teacher with the promotion of Ramendranath as Offg. Principal.

Teaching work of the school remained suspended for one year during the last stage of World War II. Meanwhile a portion of the school premises was utilised as an art education centre for service personnel.

After the departure of Ramendranath, the famous artist and portrait painter Atul Bose, an ex-student and sometime a teacher in the fine art department was taken in as Principal of the School of Art. But his appointment was only a tentative one, lasting for only about three years, from 1945 to 1948. This was a transition period for the country. We won independence on 15th August, 1947. During the short tenure of office and due to the very many troubles through which the country was then passing and other causes Principal Bose could hardly have opportunities to adopt any tangible measure for the improvement of the school. He however introduced an associateship of the Government School of Art, Calcutta (A.G.S.A.). Successful candidates in the Diploma Examination used to be admitted to this associateship.



Bathing Ghat water colour
by Samarendra Nath Chatterjee 1905-1910

Principal Dey had previously put up such a proposal but it did not then materialise. Principal Bose is to be credited with having conceived the idea of elevating the school to a full fledged college. This proposal materialised four years' later in 1951.

The Concluding Phase

After the departure of Atul Bose, Satish Chandra Sinha, Head Assistant Teacher of the school served as the acting Principal for a few months. The authorities recalled Ramendranath Chakravorty and appointed him to the post of Principal as a permanent incumbent on 24th September. Satish Chandra Sinha after making over charge to the Principal took leave for sometime and then he retired. The teacher of Indian Painting Satyendra Nath Binerjee was promoted to the post of Head Assistant Teacher in place of Satish Chandra. This post was abolished with the elevation of the school to the college. The country attained independence in late 1947 and started a new career for our mother land after decades of intensive political troubles endured by World War II. The needs of the time were wide and varied. The School of Art had to fulfil its mission with an eye to these needs of the hour. It was imperative for the school to widen and enlarge its scope and sphere as to fulfil the nation's new desires and aspirations. Principal Ramendranath took the earliest opportunity to shape the school as such.

Elevation of the school to the status of a college had already been thought of and we have seen Principal Bose had also broached the idea of an art college in some responsible quarters. Needless to add Mukul Dey had previously broad based the school for reaching such an objective during his regime as Principal. Soon after Ramendranath had taken charge of the office as Principal he laid his heart to the expansion of the school and also to remodel it. Every thing was being done with a view to raising the status of the school and satisfying the real artistic needs of the people. The revised curriculum included Fine Art (European style) Indian Painting, Applied Art (Commercial art) and Sculpture (Modelling). The department of Industrial art was languishing for various reasons which need not be narrated here. All that remained of this department being preserved in wood engraving and graphic art. Wood engraving underwent a radical change due to the invention of half-tone block. This department was afterwards mainly occupied with wood cuts. Previously Wood Engraving and Lithography were two separate departments. Now, these two as also Etching have been combined to form the new department of Graphic Art. Students entering the Diploma course in Fine Art and Indian Painting and Commercial Art are required to take either Lithography or Wood Engraving and Etching as an additional subject during their third and fourth year. Those of the Sculpture Department are required to take up either decorative wood work or Ceramics (Pottery) during the same period. Draughtsmanship class was soon abolished.

A sister unit was newly started to suit the needs of the hour. It was none other than the crafts department introduced for the first time by Principal Ramendranath in an organised manner. The crafts department consists of leather work, batik printing, decorative wood work, weaving and the ceramics. It was housed in an annexe in the compound of the school. This innovation according to Principal Chakravorty "was contemplated by Mr. Hivell and also by Sreejut Acanindra Nath Tagore to add teaching of some indigenous crafts to curriculum of the school. Art section and art gallery which were made part of our school have numerous specimens of indigenous crafts collected chiefly to show to the students of art—how beauty can be added to objects of utility". (Welcome address at the inauguration ceremony of the College.)

For the prosecution of the work in both the departments of art and crafts the instructing staff was strengthened by new additions. The post of Vice-Principal abolished with the resignation of Jannini Prakash Ganguly was again created and Sushil Chandra Sen of Delhi Polytechnic, an ex-student and some time a teacher of the school was appointed to this new post. The reorganised instructing staff included besides the Principal and the Vice-Principal, three assistant Professors, ten lecturers, ten Assistant Lecturers, one Craft Superintendent and five Craft Instructors. Later the post of a Registrar was also created. The appointment of a Registrar or a Bursar for the school had been long ago proposed by Principal Dey in order to relieve the Principal of administrative works of routine type.

Under these circumstances the ground work having been prepared the authorities lost no time in realising their dream and made preparations for transforming the school into a first rank art college. The college started functioning on 1st July, 1951. But the inauguration ceremony of the college was however held later on the 29th September of that year under the presidency of Dr. Kailash Nath Katju, then Governor (Rajyapal) of West Bengal. In his welcome address Principal Chakravorty gave a brief history of the institution and recalled its varied activities in the direction of art study both in its western and eastern form. The pioneers of art education on this side of India were also respectfully referred to in this connection. He emphasised on the need of widening the scope of art instruction so that it might faithfully respond to our national aspirations.

In this connection an exhibition was organised mainly with the production of the crafts department. The object and utility of this exhibition has been beautifully described by Principal Chakravorty in his welcome address, which partly runs as follows :

"On this happy occasion we have arranged a small exhibition mainly of the crafts which are already being taught here, together with work both of our former teaching staff and my present colleagues.

This exhibition will give you an idea about the quick response we have received from our students who are eager to learn the technique of producing tasteful designs on various objects which are necessary for daily use. Our object here is to impart good taste by way of cultivating artistic designs. The work is done on simple inexpensive materials so that it will not be for well-to-do people alone, but be within the reach of common man who has not lost his soul for beauty."

The exhibition was enriched with the products presented as exhibits by the local government, the department of Industries, Central Government, as well as many other from the Visva Bharati. It should be mentioned that the Visva Bharati had the services of Rathindranath Tagore for the development of the crafts department there. Some sort of closer contact was established between these two institutions through Ramendranath. It was Rabindranath who in order to beautify our every day life in our own way ushered in the crafts department in the Visva Bharati long ago and the constant efforts and activities in this direction gave a concrete shape to the crafts department there and Ramendranath imbibed the ideas of art and crafts education from the Visva Bharati and successfully transplanted them in the Government institution.

Annual exhibitions as we have found already were organised in the school premises with the paintings of teachers and students and appreciative comments on them also appeared from time to time in leading journals. But with Ramendranath exhibitions turned into a regular feature of art education in the College. These also served greatly to attract visitors art lovers and connoisseurs who could make an estimate of the progress of art study by the students. For the diffusion of art education its importance can hardly be minimised. By the time the people at large had developed an aesthetic sense. The beautiful paintings and artistic crafts are therefore, the things of joy to the ordinary people.

Besides annual exhibition there has been another forum of common interest for the staff and the students. It is *Rupakala* an art journal published annually since 1954-55. Unlike the former *Our Magazine* in English this annual number is a bilingual journal—English and Bengal. It is an invaluable addition for the diffusion of art study in and out of the College.

In this connection the exhibition of Nandalal Bose's retrospective paintings held in the College premises in 1953 should be specially mentioned. Ramendranath took the initiative in organising this exhibition, and had to face very many difficulties to collect the exhibits which were scattered throughout the country and even beyond. Sarvapalli Radhakrishnan then Vice-President did the honour of opening this exhibition. The opening ceremony was marked with many a speciality hitherto unknown in the life of the institution. Acharya Kshati Mohan Sen Sastri chanted Vedic hymns and the students sang songs suited to the occasion.

Ramendranath went to the United States of America by the middle of 1952 on receipt of the leader grant from the U.S.A. Government. The academy of fine arts, Calcutta empowered him to organise exhibitions on behalf of that organisation in the prominent cities of that country. He took this opportunity to exhibit his own printings and wood cuts. He however had to curtail his programme and returned to India before time early in 1953.

Some important changes occurred in the instructing staff. Manindra Bhusan Gupta the great artist of Buddhist's themes had been off on retirement and Manik Lal Banerjee was brought in from the David Hare Training College. Basanta Kumar Ganguly of Fine Art retired and Dev Kumar Roy Chowdhury of the Hooghly Training College stepped in. Another important change took place with the retirement of Satyendranath Banerjee who was in charge of Indian painting since 1932. Satyendranath's services for remodeling and reorienting the Indian painting department in the early thirties are remembered with gratitude even today. He retired in December 1952. The vacancy caused by his retirement was filled up by Indu Rakshit one of the prominent students of the school and then an artist of considerable repute.

Ramendranath mooted the proposal of holding the centenary celebrations of the school, now college even in 1954 and entrusted the present writer with compiling a comprehensive account of its activities throughout the hundred years. But the centenary celebrations had then to be postponed due to the fact that though the school was originally started in 1854 and it did not function as a Government institution till 1864. Ramendranath's life was cut short suddenly on 6 July, 1955. His contribution to art is not only confined to his paintings, wood cuts, and crafts. Ramendranath is to be credited with several publications. These are :

1. Wood cuts (an album of signed hand prints.)
2. The call of the Himalayas (Wood engravings of the sketch made on the artists tour to the Himalayas.
3. Sketches of Europe before the War.
4. Abanindranath Tagore—his early works a publications from art section, Indian Museum.

After his death Sushil Chandra Sen the Vice-Principal of the College officiated as Principal till the appointment of the present Principal Chintamani Kar.

Chintamani Kar was appointed Principal on 1st August, 1956. An ex-student of the Indian Society of Oriental Art, Principal Kar went in

1938 for further prosecution of his study in London first and then to Paris and acquired proficiency in painting and sculpture. He returned to India in 1940. He again went to Europe and spent about ten years in London where he gave proof of his proficiency in Sculpture and earned the distinction of being the first and the only Indian member of the Royal Society of British Sculptors. After his acceptance of office as the Principal of Art College he introduced several reforms in the examination system. The school confers diplomas to the successful candidates in the final examination every year. Principal Dey introduced for the first time a ceremonial function, styled as convocation as early as in 1929 for this purpose. Dr. Devadatta Ramakrishna Bhandarkar of the Calcutta University presided over the function. We do not hear of any further convocation until the time of Principal Kar. It was due to the effort of Principal Kar that this system of annual convocation was reintroduced. During his regime the first convocation was held in the school premises on 23rd December, 1956 under the presidency of Dr. Nirmal Kumar Siddhanta, then Vice-Chancellor of the Calcutta University. For various reasons convocations could not be organised for succeeding three years. We find that it was again held on 9th April, 1960 and Dr. Sumit Kumar Chatterjee delivered the convocation address. With two years gap it was held on 15th March, 1963 and again on 13th March, 1964. Addresses were delivered by O. C. Ganguly and Devi Prasad Roy Chowdhury respectively. Needless to add that the diplomas and certificates of this institution are obviously of high artistic value.

Principal Kar obtained fellowship from the French Government for research work in the Louvre Museum, Paris and stayed there for nine months in 1960-61. He rejoined his post as Principal in 1961. Afterwards in August 1962 he was temporarily posted to the Education Directorate, West Bengal, as Officer on Special Duty (Art). Chintamani Kar rejoined the permanent post of the Principal of the College on 23rd July, 1964.

He is the author of the following publications :

Farasi Silpi O Samaj (in Bengali) (1940), Classical Indian Sculpture (1950), Indian Metal Sculpture (1952), Samadhyas (in Bengali) (1959).

Immediately after he joined office Principal Kar took up the matter of celebrating the centenary of the College in right earnest. On the 19th December, 1964 the Centenary celebrations took place in the premises of the College with the veteran art-critic and connoisseur O. C. Ganguly in the Chair. An exhibition was also organised on this occasion. The present history of the College of Art and Craft constitutes a part of the centenary celebrations programme. The exhibition was inaugurated by Shri Rabiindralal Sinha the Education Minister.

Something more should be said here of the art gallery. The reader has already been acquainted with the object for which the gallery was instituted in 1876 by the Government as an annex to the art school. The art gallery served as a supplement to the Government School of Art from its inception and constituted as such a part and parcel of it. The gallery had for its Keeper the Principal of the school, later College. Though it has been housed since 1911 in a portion of Indian Museum premises adjacent to the school yet the gallery was serving one of its original purposes. The paintings—European and Indian procured for the gallery were a source of inspiration to the students and served as models for paintings. The art gallery is now fallen under the administrative control of the Indian Museum and the Principal is no longer the Keeper of the gallery since early this year (1965).

One word also about the Governing Body of the School, now College. Although the institution is being managed directly by the Education Department since 1864, there has always been an Advisory Council now known as Governing Body. It has all along been a Government appointed committee constituted largely with official members both Indian and European. Art lovers and connoisseurs of the eminence of Dr. Sanku Kumar Chatteropadhyay, now National Professor of India, Ram Prasad Chandra Devadatta Ramkrishna Bhandarkar and the like also served as members of this body. The Principal of the College is now ex-officio Secretary to the Governing Body. In the present body Uday Chand Mahatab of the Burdwan Raj is the President.

I have now come to the end of my story. The institution is today 111 years old. A tradition of art education in the country has developed round about it for which we all are thankful to the pioneer 'labourers' in the cause of art and art education in India. The first 10 years of the life was under the management of a voluntary organisation of notable persons both Indians and Europeans. Like a human life, any institution worth the name has its childhood, youth, maturity and old age. The College of Art formerly known as the School of Art is no exception of it. In old age infirmity dominates the human body but in case of an institution it is otherwise. New blood and new spirit infuse the whole frame of the institution time and again and keep up the youth and vigour even when it is a century old. This institution has been fortunate to have vigorous and gifted people to guide it through the very many vicissitudes natural for an institution of such a standing. We remember with gratitude the selfless votaries of art connected with this institution who have not only worked for it but also disseminated art education throughout the country and even beyond. May this institution be the medium of beautifying our life even in these days of strife and turmoil.

It is very natural that the services rendered by this institution would not always be perceptible to ordinary people. But we should pause

and think how greatly the art college has influenced the taste and esthetic sense of the nation as a whole.

It has not been an easy task to record the comprehensive history of a century of an institution like the College of Art and Craft whose activities and contributions are many and various, within this limited space. I beg to state with due apology that many things had, therefore, to be omitted which otherwise might have been mentioned.

I look forward to the day when some abler person will compile a full-fledged history of this institution.

Bibliographical Notes and Acknowledgements

To prepare a connected account of our educational institutions we have to depend more or less on the Annual reports of the Director of Public Instruction, Quinquennial Reports (Provincial and Quinquennial Reviews (Central) on education. These require to be supplemented by the contemporary newspapers, journals as well as relevant treatises. I have ransaked, as far as possible, most of these sources in the course of compiling this account. For an art study the reports of prominent exhibitions are also necessary. I have spared no pains to use them also. Years ago I wrote a short history of the Art School up to the date of its transfer to the Government. This account is incorporated in four articles of mine published in *Prabasi*, *Jyaisir*, *Ashat*, *Srabar* and *Aswin* 1359 B.S. Very few accounts of the school prior to the transfer appeared in the reports on Education and I had therefore largely to depend on the English and Bengali newspapers and journals of the period.

I am now blind and have to depend solely on my friends for the required materials. My friend Srijut Indu Rakshit, Lecturer of Art College has given me material for compiling this account of later period. It is due to the importunities of Sriman Shibendra Krishna Mukhopadhyay of the Indian Museum, Art Section that I took up this work in spite of my present infirmity. In this connection I should recall that the late Principal Ramendra Nath Chakravorty first thought of such a history and approach me to take up the work. It was, for reasons not be stated here a labour of love for me and I started the work immediately. I am sorry to say that Principal Chakravorty could not see his desire fulfilled as he died in harness. It was left for the present Principal Chintamani Kar to materialise the desire of Ramendranath and it is very good and kind of him to entrust me with the work even in my impaired state of health. Thank God, I have at last been somehow able to complete the work. My special thanks are due to the Bangiya Sahitya Parishad, The National Library, The Art College Library and Sri Ramkrishna Pathagar

(Naba Barrackpore) for providing me with books and papers whenever necessary. In this connection I should refer to the kind help of Atul Bose, the Principal of the Art School, Indu Rakshit, Siben Mukhopadhyaya, Bimala Charan Deb, Chittaranjan Banerjee, Pran Gopal Das, Kanailal Datta, Nagendranath Chakravorty and Sailendranath Guha Roy of Saraswati Press.

WHICH WAY INDIAN ART?

MUKUL DEY

Bengal—Hundred Years' Ago

ABOUT a century ago it was decided by the British Raj that modern education should be given to us through the medium of the English language. The younger generation in Bengal gradually got rid of their superstitions and prejudices, and broadened their minds by coming into contact with a virile literature. They were, for at least fifty years, completely overcome by British influence. Many at that time even tried to forget Bengali and to learn English. Many even embraced Christianity mainly for the sake of its prestige, and young Bengal in general tended to look down upon anything which had the slightest Indian flavour in it. Indigenous literature and art found a precarious refuge in Bartola and Kalighat while the educated classes wore frock-coats, furnished their homes with plush furniture from European shops and gratified their artistic cravings with nude marble statues bought from undertakers, garnishing their conversation and letters with fluent quotations from Shakespeare, Milton and Byron.

Thoughtful Englishmen in India were, however, horrified to see themselves thus caricatured by the young Bengalis of the day, and their ill-disguised contempt for these outcasts from their own traditions proved eventually to be their own salvation. Educated Bengalis soon came to realise that unless they laid a solid foundation of Indian culture underneath the European culture which they were striving so hard to imbibe, it would lead them nowhere, but merely make them the laughing stock of thinking Englishmen and Indians alike. The result was a quickening of the national pulse in every field of life, followed by what may be called the birth of Modern Indian culture.

The Anglo-Indian school of thought and learning, however, prevailed throughout the 19th Century in large parts of the country.

Revival of Indian Art in 1900 A.D.

Kakuzo Okakura, a famous Japanese art critic and a master of the then modern Japanese art, and many other Japanese artists came to Calcutta and following the ancient Indian technique painted pictures of Indian subjects and gave demonstrations in right lines in Calcutta from 1900 A.D. They warned the Bengali artists against cheap imitations of the West and advised them to follow their own old traditions.

Gagonendra Nath and his younger brother Abanindranath were thus inspired. The Japanese Masters actually demonstrated how to draw and paint on paper and silk in the technique of Ajanta and Bagh paintings.

Indeed, India has yet to make due acknowledgement of the debt that she owes to these pioneer pilgrims of art and culture from a friendly foreign land, who opened the eyes of contemporary leaders of thought in Eastern India. Their successors still continue their interest in old Indian art, without being given due recognition for such keen interest. Indeed, there are no visible signs of any desire on the part of India to benefit by the goodwill and expert knowledge in fine arts and crafts of such friendly people.

Incidentally, it would be of interest to know that a school of Japanese Art still continue to paint in ancient Indian technique (including similar colour) of Wall-paintings. Japan is the only country where this old technique is still alive today.

The Society of Oriental Art, 1907

Bengal started taking the lead from appreciative Englishmen who respected the new art movement and started "The Indian Society of Oriental Art" in Calcutta which was then the capital of India and the centre of Indian art movements. Lord Kitchner of the Fort William, Calcutta, became the first President of this Society in 1907.

Havell and Tagore

About 70 years ago Mr. E. B. Havell was the Principal of the Government School of Art in Calcutta. He was one of those Europeans who believed that the salvation of Indian Art could only be achieved by the Indian artists going back to their own traditions. Mr. Havell however, met with much adverse criticism from the Press and the public, but he had an infinite capacity for taking pains. In the Government School of Art he had Dr. Abanindranath Tagore as Vice-Principal to whom Havell confided his dreams about the future of Indian art. Abanindranath himself had some years previous to this, finished with his experiments in following the European style. He seized this opportunity to abandon the teaching of imitation European art in his classes, and to take steps to bring out the latent talents of the pupils themselves. Havell and Tagore cleared the Art Gallery attached to the School of its copies of third or fourth-rate European pictures and worthless plaster casts of Greek models, and began to collect in their place real Indian art objects to serve as inspiration and not as models for imitation.

At first only four or five enthusiastic students joined Tagore's new Indian painting class, the rest remaining indifferent to his call. But the result showed that these pioneers alone were able to rise to the

height of their inborn talents, while the other students remained buried in oblivion. Of these successful pioneers a few are now dead but all of them proved to be efficient heads of Government Art Schools in different provinces of India during the British period.

Bengal School of Art (1900 to 1940 A.D.)

From this humble beginning Tagore and his pupils brought into being what is known as the Bengal School of Art. They began to send their work to various exhibitions and drew the admiration of all true art-lovers. Soon Abanindranath began to attract more and more students to his classes and their constant attempts at original self-expression gave the impetus to do likewise to many a young artist in other parts of India.

In 1910 Lady Herringham came out to India on behalf of the 'India Society' in London, to copy the frescoes of Ajanta. She applied to Abanindranath Tagore to supply her with artists to assist her in this work. He deputed his pupils who acquitted themselves so well that, when Lady Herringham returned to England, English art-lovers and art-critics at once began to take notice of the Bengal School. Abanindranath himself obtained recognition with a C.I.E. from Government, and with the degree of Doctor of Literature conferred by Calcutta University. When, however, Mr. Havell retired from the Government School of Art an Englishman was chosen to be the Principal and with the consequent resignation of Tagore in 1915 the Indian Art Department was practically abolished from the Government Art School, Calcutta. Fortunately, however, this did not give any setback to the Bengal art movement. Art students flocked round Tagore's own studio in his Jorasanko house where they were always welcome and where they learnt all Tagore had to teach without having to bear the expenses of their education.

Characteristics of Bengal School

One has to guard a movement with great care, when it is in its infancy so that it may not be damaged by adverse outside influence. Abanindranath Tagore and his disciples had to nurse their school of art like a hot house plant. They drew their inspiration from Indian mythology and tradition including by-gone Indian history, and their paintings at first were mainly confined to subjects derived therefrom. They were in the beginning somewhat afraid of modern life, lest they should be drawn merely into imitative representation. This led them to avoid landscapes or portraits, the representation of present day objects or events, so their work remained somewhat artificial, in the sense that it was not the outcome of their own actual experiences, but rather of a dreamland which they made real by giving it colour and form for those who had the eyes to see, and the hearts to feel with them. Painting

